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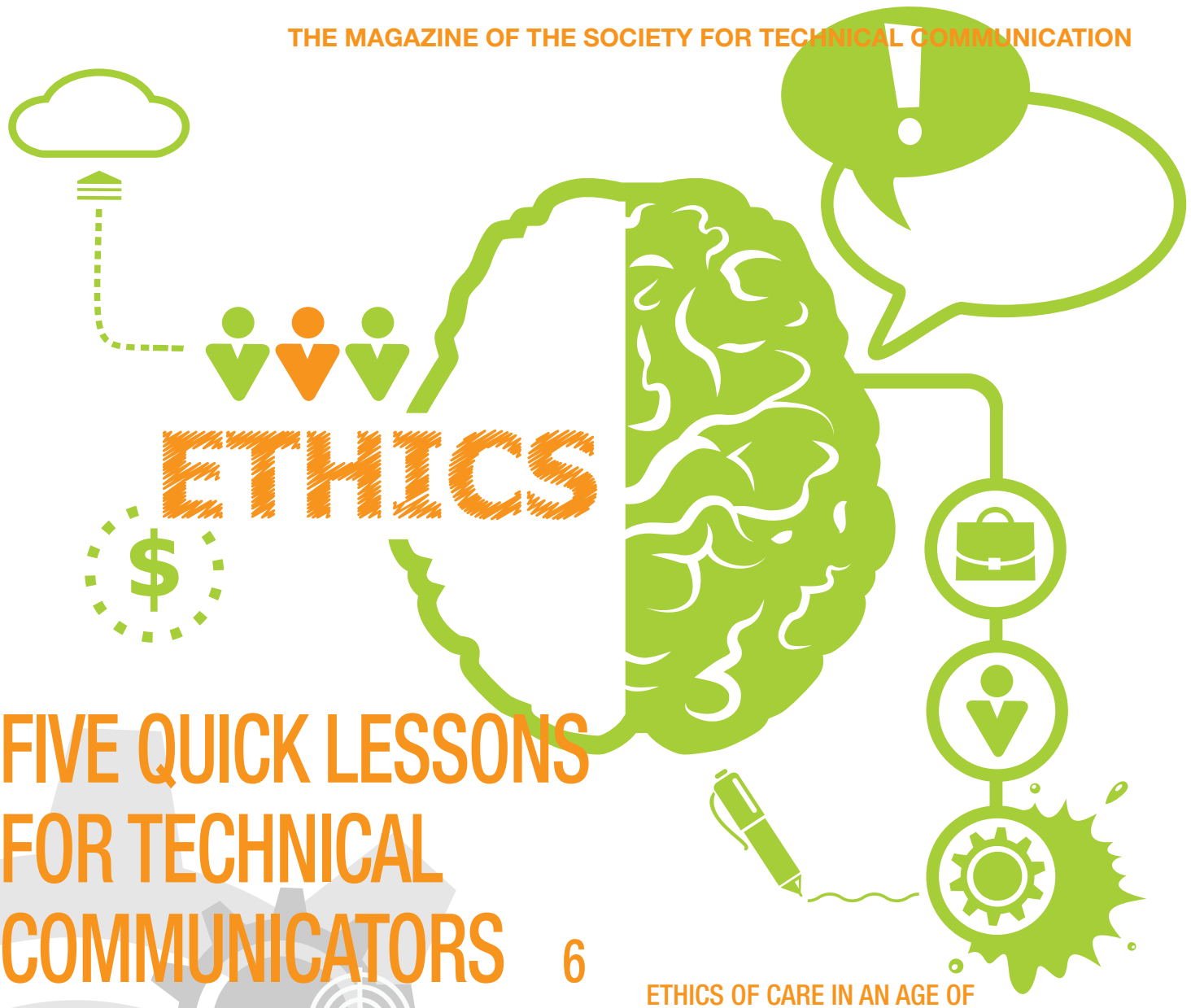

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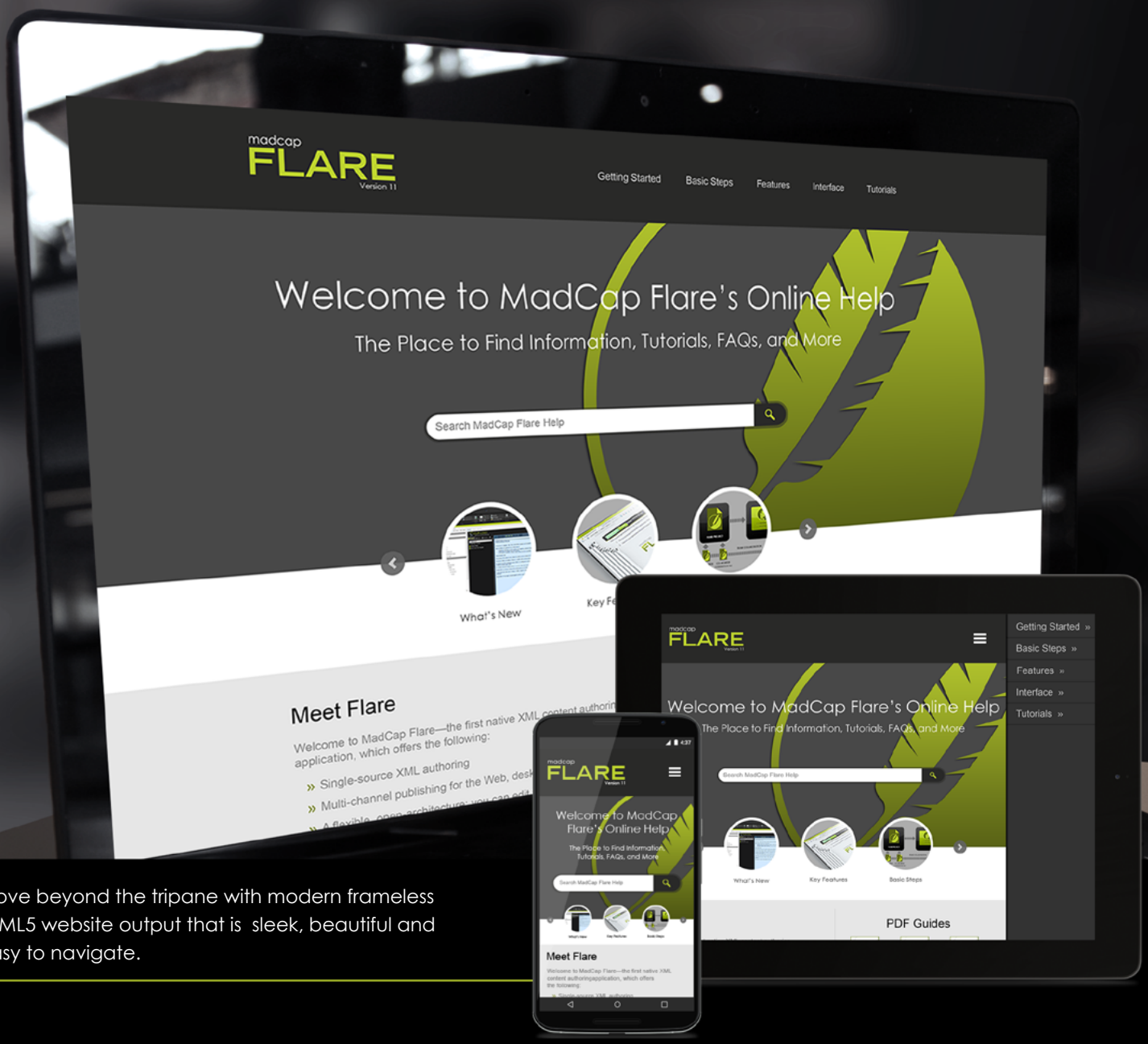

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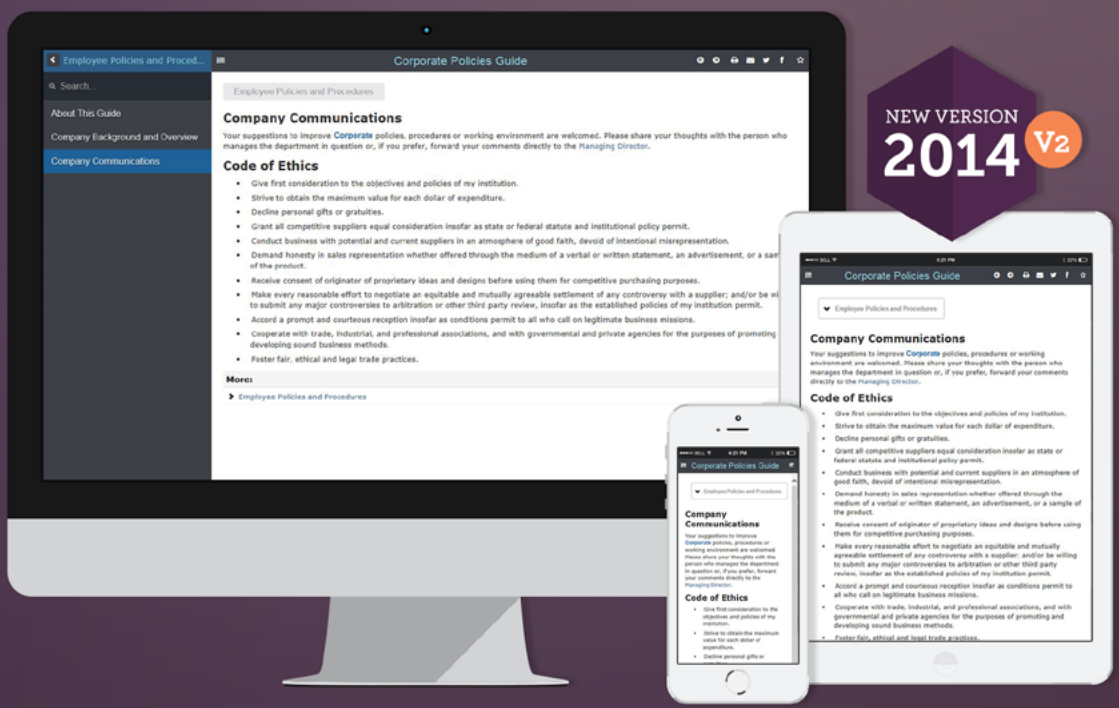

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A Note from the Editor

THE MAY ISSUE of *Intercom* centers on ethics and has been guest edited by Dr. Derek Ross. Derek is an associate professor in Auburn University's Master of Technical and Professional Communication Program; co-director of LUCIA, Auburn's laboratory for usability, communication interaction, and accessibility; and the ethics columnist for *Intercom*. His research interests include perceptions of environmental rhetoric, ethics, and document design.

I am quite pleased with the issue Derek has put together. He solicited six articles from well-known experts in the field. Topics range from ethics lessons and everyday advice, to ethics in health care, ethics in visual displays, ethical experience architecture, and the ethics of "other" knowledge. I thank Derek and all the authors in this issue for their contributions to knowledge in technical communication.

Liz Pohland

—Liz Pohland
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From the Guest Editor

SAM DRAGGA ONCE told our ethics class that "no one wants to read what you write." I thought, "Man. What a bummer." But it's often true in technical communication. We're not writing the next *History of Hogwarts*, we're writing documentation for Hogwarts' communication systems. We're designing, or facilitating, systems images, medical information, complex instruction sets, charts and graphs, and more. We network, accommodate, articulate, and steward. Technical communicators don't often write the books that we'll pick up on our next flight to the Summit, but we *do* write the information that lets the airplane get built, the tickets get sold, and the radar systems keep doing what they need to do. We codify knowledge and life goes on.

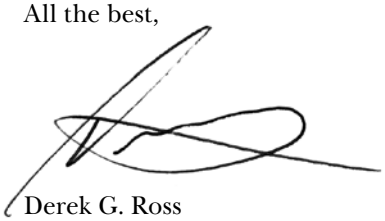
That's why, to my mind, this is such a valuable issue of *Intercom*, and one I was happy to help shape. Ethics is a complicated, messy study. Ethics allows us to justify our decisionmaking process to ourselves and others; asks us to think through difficult, often un-solvable problems; asks us to recognize that every action has a reaction—and every reaction may neither be "equal," nor "opposite." Folks tend to shy away from ethics, and after serving as the ethics column editor for *Intercom* for the past couple of years, teaching classes on the subject, and incorporating the study of ethics into my own research and writing, I can see why. Ethics is frustrating. Ethics *are* frustrating. Many of us come from a scientific or semi-scientific background. Or we work with scientists, engineers, computer scientists, medical professionals, business analysts, and startup companies. We work with "hard facts," "solid data," "real-world information." And that, to me, is why ethics is so important. In the presentation of those facts, data-points, and (T)truths, we're forced to make decisions that may ultimately shape how someone acts on any given day. We may write a manual, or design instructions, or help network a series of communications that ultimately lead to someone *actually doing something* in the world. Hogwarts makes us smile. Technical communication makes us act.

Our own Society for Technical Communication offers a series of ethical guidelines that help shape our everyday choices. We should consider legality, honesty, confidentiality, quality, fairness, and professionalism in everything we do. Those are great starting points, but as Kelsey Loftin and Myles Cryer point out in this issue, those guidelines still leave us with complicated decisions when our employers, or clients, or even colleagues question our design choices. So this issue is important, to me and I hope to you, because rather than present you with a series of guidelines, a bunch of new technologies, and a few "how-to's," it should leave you with questions. A lot of questions. Don't get me wrong. Everything I said that this issue won't do is critical to our field and everyday operation, and if it were not for the new technologies, how to's, and guidelines offered in *Intercom*, I'd be missing out on rich and complex areas of our field. But this time we're going to ask you to do something different. This time we're going to ask you to ask yourself "what if?" rather than "what for?"

I wish I could say that, by the time you've read this issue of *Intercom*, you'll be an ethical expert. What I can say is that by the time you've read this issue of *Intercom*, you'll probably be frustrated, tired, and have a lot of questions. And that's OK, I think, because ethics is never about coming up with the *right* answer—it's about coming up with *an* answer that you can confidently support at the end of the day. "Right" suggests that we all share the same knowledge, and we wouldn't be technical communicators if we believed that.

Thank you for reading this issue. I hope that it offers you something to think about, I hope that it offers you something to talk about, and I hope that, at the end of the day, you leave with some new ideas, and some new approaches to this rich field we call home. And if you *are* writing the next *History of Hogwarts*, I hope that you're now thinking about the implications of your actions even more than usual.

All the best,



Derek G. Ross
Auburn University Department of English

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Five Quick Lessons in Ethics FOR TECHNICAL COMMUNICATORS

By SAM DRAGGA | *Senior Member*

IN TEACHING ETHICS in technical communication, I am never at loss for negative examples (and thanks to a growing list of B Corporations, I am never at loss for positive examples either. B Corporations are "better companies—better for workers, better for communities, and better for the environment;" each has been reviewed and certified as meeting rigorous criteria for responsible operating practice [*www.bcorporation.net*]). Students ordinarily come to my class expecting that I'll have all the answers, but the genuine learning is in my asking lots of annoying questions—questions about which questions to ask and how and why.

Training in ethics, ongoing conversations regarding ethics, continuous review of ethics cases, and periodic revision of ethics guidelines are all vital to the practice of ethics in technical communication. Unless ethics is vivid in the minds of both employers and employees, I advise my students, organizations and individuals will likely default to the expedient and the self-serving.

Thus, to encourage us to keep ethics in mind, I offer the following five quick lessons (and 30 questions):

Lesson 1: On the Juggling of Obligations

Each of us is always juggling multiple ethical obligations. I know, for example, that I have responsibilities to my employer, but also to myself, my family, my discipline, my profession, and my community. I know that I will be perceived as a representative of the Department of English and the field of technical communication by faculty, students, and administrators across Texas Tech University. I will be perceived by individuals in the community—parents, neighbors, friends, and relatives—as a representative of Texas Tech University, of technical communicators, of college professors, etc. Their opinion of technical communication, of the humanities, and of higher education itself will be influenced by my words, behavior, integrity, energy, successes, and failures. Willing or unwilling, I am almost always a salient embodiment of my discipline and my institution; for good or for ill, I am Texas Tech University, I am technical communication, I am the academic profession. There's little or no separation of my private and public selves, my private and public moralities. I must always aspire to bring credit to my institution and my discipline.

Note that the practice of ignoring the entire human being and considering people only in the singularity of their occupation or profession—of public ethics versus private morality—itself has ethical consequences, dividing identity from behavior and changing the ethical question from "Who will I be?" to "What will I do?" If ethics is disassociated from identity, it is possible for the individual in his/her private life to make moral decisions that theoretically are unrelated to his/her public life and vice versa (e.g., the kind neighbor but hostile boss, the generous colleague but abusive spouse). The virtual fusion of public and private life through ubiquitous technologies and immediate and infinite distribution of information, however, is again integrating public and private moralities.

Lesson 2: On the Weighing of Consequences

Your public and private obligations are typically exercised according to your judgment regarding consequences. That is, you do a cost-benefit analysis in deciding which issues are essential to fight for (by paying the high cost of jeopardizing your job, your reputation, etc.), which could be fought for less vigorously or more quietly, and which could be readily forfeited. This is a sliding scale of moral compromises.

While you might claim that potential loss of life and serious injury merit your unqualified effort to take all necessary action, it's the variables of minor injury, major property damage/loss, and minor property damage/loss that are more likely to occur and foil the cost-benefit analysis of ethics. Is potential loss of a hand or eye the same as major property damage? If it's a child's hand? If it's a photographer's eye? Who makes this decision? According to which criteria?

And every case includes estimating risk—assessing the chances that a given condition will cause loss of life, injury, or damage. Which is the fight you would pick? The 1 in 1,000 risk of serious injury? Or the 1 in 100 risk of minor property damage? Both? How does your weighing of perceived costs differ according to anticipated benefits? Are you willing to risk higher costs for higher benefits?

And would you typically have time on the job to do this cost-benefit analysis? Would each individual technical communicator have to do this analysis on the fly? Or could detailed guidelines be devised for the entire organization or the entire profession of technical communicators: e.g., "if there's a 1 in 1000 risk of minor injury, do A, B, and C; if it's a 1 in 100 risk, do A, B, C, and D?"

If we never identify the potential questions and never consider the inviting array of satisfactory but impractical or practical but unsatisfactory answers, we are ill-equipped for the dynamics of addressing ethical issues on the job. Thinking through likely and unlikely scenarios allows us develop agile habits of mind (see, for example, Steven May's *Case Studies in Organizational Communication: Ethical Perspectives and Practices*, 2d ed., Sage, 2013).

Lesson 3: On the Intersection of Obligations

Employers also have ethical duties to their employees, including always bringing credit to their employees by creating and sustaining a reputation for integrity, innovation, caring, etc. The evil that unscrupulous employers do will damage the reputation of their employees as much as the evil that dishonest employees do will damage the reputation of their employers. Imagine if every corporate code of conduct included something like "We will always try to be a company that employees are proud of" or "We will never do anything to make you embarrassed about working for this company" or words to that effect. It isn't always feasible for employees to avoid ethical failures if their employers don't offer a supportive environment with the time and resources to do jobs effectively.

Note also that employers and employees together have ethical duties to their clients and customers, to their industry, to the public, etc.

This question of ethical responsibility is never easily answered unless it's to acknowledge that we are all always responsible. In cases of ethical failure, is it the individual making unethical decisions who is responsible? Is it the institution that created conditions causing or contributing to the individual's decisions? Is it individual executives of the institution or is it historic processes of the institution or the industry within which it operates? Is it the government that failed to appropriately inspect and regulate the institution or industry, thus allowing the corrupting conditions? Is it individual inspectors/regulators or historic processes of the regulating/inspecting agency? Is it the society that failed to give necessary economic and political support to government regulators and inspectors or their regulating/inspecting agencies?

Lesson 4: On the Contribution of Technical Communicators

Every institution, corporation, and organization has a history that influences its decisions as well as the way its decisions are perceived (e.g., Exxon, Pfizer, Toyota): its history and the history of the industry in which it operates together impose on it extraordinary ethical obligations. Sensitivity to your organization's unique ethical obligations is a vital insight you offer as a technical communicator. If it's building vehicles, making medicines, or drilling for oil, a skilled technical communicator realizes the weight of the organization's history-related and industry-related moral baggage.

Obviously, it isn't always that communication failures have catastrophic consequences, but tragic cases (including oil spills and refinery explosions) inspire us to exercise both vigilance and courage in the reporting of risks as well as to realize how critical it is that trained technical communicators do this job, exercising the repertoire of rhetorical abilities developed through education and experience. Asking individuals untrained in technical communication and rhetoric (e.g., engineers) to make a persuasive case for inconvenient actions or decisions might be expedient, but is it ethical? Is it ethical to risk the rhetorical errors (and resulting injuries or losses) that untrained individuals are likelier to generate? Is it ethical to put untrained individuals in this position?

Training in the ethics of technical communication allows us to consider the entire rhetorical/cultural/social environment within which employers and employees operate. While the prevailing inclination is to identify individual villains in ethical failures (e.g., the devious vice president, the deceptive advisor), as technical communicators we also consider systemic sources. For example, we know that businesses typically operate

on utilitarian ethics, doing cost-benefit analyses of their choices. If we the people don't support enough regulators/inspectors/monitors to raise the cost of misbehavior, we encourage businesses to engage in misbehavior. We the people are also doing a cost-benefit analysis regarding the level of misbehavior we're willing to tolerate relative to the taxes and loss of liberties necessary to police misbehavior. If we the people don't like businesses engaging in misbehavior, but also don't like supporting regulators/inspectors/monitors, we must inspire better behavior through changing the ethical perspective on which businesses operate and on which we the people operate. Technical communicators might be especially equipped for generating and mediating this wider conversation—cultivating opportunities for dialogue about ethics and assisting all parties with reviewing their principles and practices and communicating their ideas and ideals to each other.

While we focus on the ethical failures of organizations and consider the opportunities for intervention by technical communicators, we must also recognize that sometimes this intervention includes the heroic job of questioning and changing the institutional policies and processes that generate moral minefields.

For example, consider this page from the site of the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC): *www.eeoc.gov/employees/howtofile.cfm*.

U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission
How to File a Charge of Employment Discrimination
Online Assessment System
Filing in Person

How often do survivors of discrimination give up after reading these bewildering paragraphs? Where are the numbered steps? Why can't this process be simplified? Why can't the instructions be simplified? Why isn't the process illustrated with a flow chart? Why can't victims file charges online? And why isn't the EEOC's URL for this page *www.eeoc.gov/complaint* or something equally intuitive? Or why doesn't a URL like *www.eeoc.gov/complaint* or *www.eeoc.gov/grievance* at least automatically direct you to the right page?

Consider the page on the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) site for filing a grievance about air or water pollution: *http://www2.epa.gov/enforcement/report-environmental-violations*.

Yes, the URL ought to be *www.epa.gov/complaint* or something equally intuitive, but the page is fairly simple to decipher and navigate, thus it is fairly simple to file a grievance (if you manage to find this page on the EPA site). Why isn't the EEOC grievance page equally clear and simple? Why can't the design of all grievance pages be relatively consistent across all agencies of the same government?

Technical communicators could seize the opportunity for ethical action by designing a more effective page and giving the survivors of discriminatory practices or pollution of their environment a vigorous and unyielding voice in their organizations, industries, and communities.

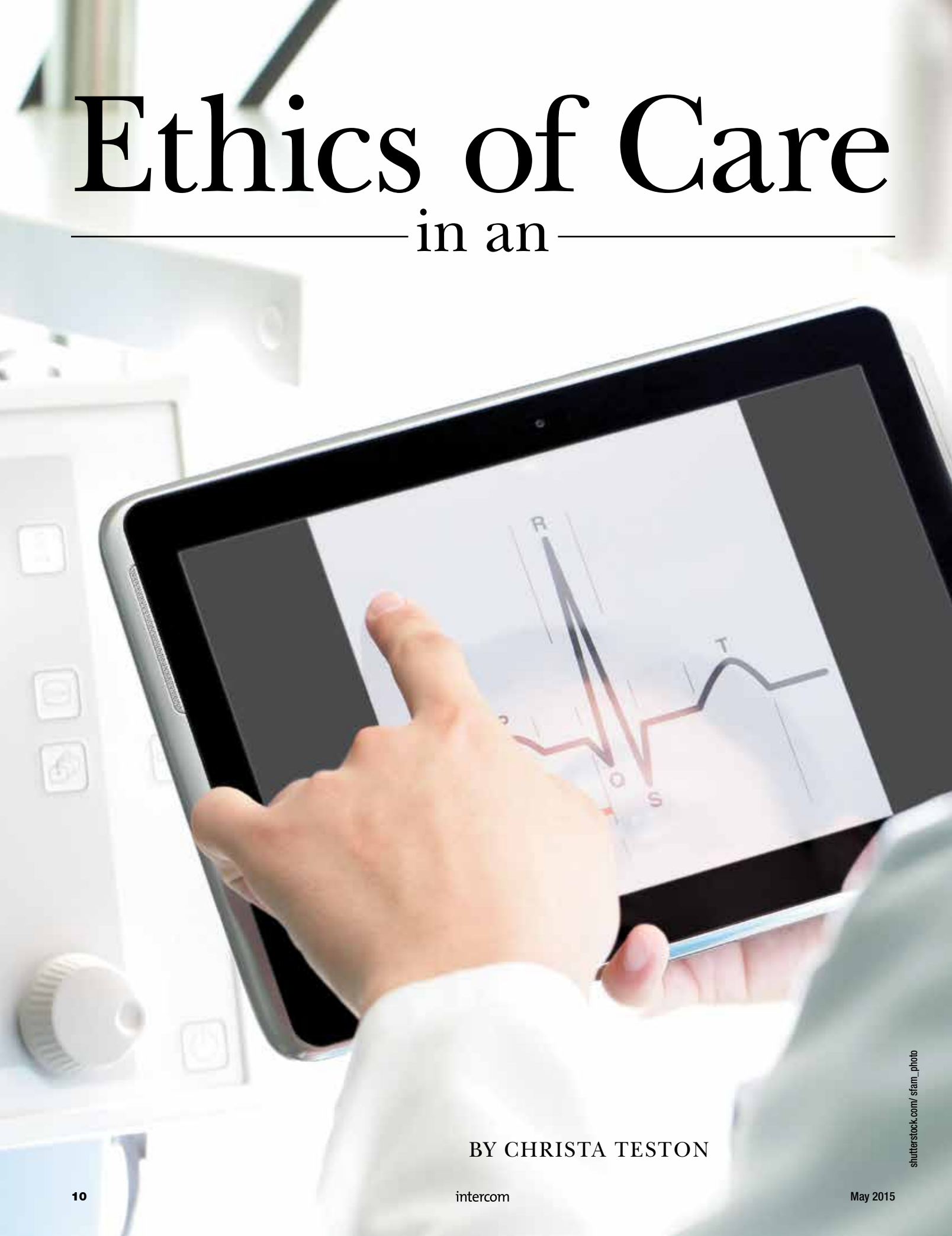
Lesson 5: On the Obligation to Question

In all of this intervention, discussion, and mediation, technical communicators must acknowledge the multiplicity of virtues and vices (i.e., the multiple ways that it is possible for individuals and institutions to do good or to do evil or to do neither, both sequentially and simultaneously). We'll have to be sensitive to hypocrisy and forgiving of frail human beings, human institutions, and human societies.

We must always intervene, discuss, and mediate in ways that 1) exemplify how to do this effectively and ethically, and 2) make employers and employees aware that a technical communicator's job includes the raising of questions about ethical issues.

DR. SAM DRAGGA *is professor of technical communication at Texas Tech University. He is co-author of* The Essentials of Technical Communication *(3d ed., Oxford University Press, 2015) as well as author or co-author of a score of articles in journals and collections on topics related to professional ethics and intercultural communication. He is a Fellow of the Association of Teachers of Technical Writing and a recipient of STC's Jay R. Gould Award for Excellence in Teaching Technical Communication.*

Ethics of Care in an



BY CHRISTA TESTON

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Age of Commodified Health Futures

WE LIVE IN A TIME when individual health can be forecasted through genetic testing, monitored with wearable health technologies, and insured after shopping in an online marketplace. Gaining a sense of control over our health futures has never been more available. It has also never been more expensive. According to the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, the United States' total health-related expenditures as a percentage of gross domestic product has increased from 5.1 percent in 1960 to 17.4 percent in 2009. In an age of commodified health futurity, how do we ensure ethical care?

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration's (FDA) recent approval of 23andMe, Inc.'s direct-to-consumer marketing of an at-home genetic testing kit for Bloom Syndrome is but one example of how health futures are constructed through commodified biomedical technologies. Biomedical technologies that shape constructions of possible health futures aren't just located in laboratories and hospitals, however—we wear them on our wrists while they count steps, monitor sleep, and estimate caloric burn. The problem of how to document and store ubiquitous and persistently available body data has led to the commodification of yet another care technology: the electronic medical record. Physicians and other health professionals have been incentivized monetarily by the U.S. Government's Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services to adopt electronic medical recordkeeping as a standard practice. Technologies such as the electronic medical record, direct-to-consumer genetic testing kits, and FitBits are not just methods for documenting an abundance of body data. They have also been marketed as technologies that afford individual empowerment, choice, and the democratization of medical decision making.

Perhaps those living in industrialized nations have always been consumers of health. But given increasing consumer demand and subsequent availability of health technologies that may or may not be intended to act as surrogates for human-to-human care, how might technical communicators operationalize an ethic of care in a manner sensitive to the ways in which health futures are commodified?

Those of us who study and teach technical communication have found at-home genetic testing kits, wearable health technologies, and electronic medical record software interesting and meaningful sites for improving user experience, documentation, and design. Given the role of technology in the commodification of health futurity, technical communicators are uniquely positioned to help enact an ethic of care.

What follows are three propositions for an ethic of care that technical communication scholars, practitioners, and educators might consider as they work at the intersections of medicine, science, and bodies—whether it be as an architect or designer of user experience, documentation software, or interfaces. Throughout, I operationalize Annemarie Mol, et al.'s definition of good care as "persistent tinkering in a world full of complex ambivalence and shifting tensions" (14) since, in a way, technical communicators are experts in tinkering. Either as reminder of or revision to an ethic of care not yet attentive to commodified, biomedicalized health futures, I propose the following.

1. Care is not solely a human enterprise.

Technologies do not merely intervene upon illness or mediate care—they are constitutive. An ethic of care in an age of commodified health futurity is attentive to the role of tools and technologies as equal contributors to contexts of health, wellness, disease, and disorder. Such a proposition opens up possibilities for technical communicators' understanding of use, experience, documentation, and design.

Within an ethic of care that assumes that tools and technologies are not merely epiphenomenal to contexts of disease, diagnosis, and prognosis, technical communicators might explore the ingenuity of unintended use—e.g., using mirrors and sun to sterilize surgical tools in non-industrial-

ized clinics; aggregating social media posts as a way to map the spread of epidemics; or hacking a glucose monitor to better manage diabetes. Unintended use might be seen as a strategy for "persistent tinkering" amidst medical uncertainty.

Technical communicators working at the intersection of medicine, science, and bodies might find more ways to integrate opportunities for tinkering into medical technologies' design. For example, electronic medical record software designers might create interfaces that can be modified to meet the needs of a specific user—e.g., since a dermatologist's workflow is not the same as a surgeon's, unnecessary noise might be reduced during real-time medical documentation by creating specialty-specific interfaces and menus. Technical communicators could also find ways to make communication modifications less onerous for the user—reducing the number of times a question is repeated on a medical questionnaire, for example, by linking datafields to form outputs.

2. Medical evidences are co-constructed phenomena.

Findings from clinical trials and other scientific methods for constructing evidences are always intimately tied to the medical experiences of actual, individual patients. For example, when a consumer of an at-home genetic testing kit sends their saliva sample to the laboratory for analysis, he or she will not only receive results of their genetic makeup based on ancestral comparisons—they also give consent to contribute their individual, genetic information to an international database (called a HapMap) upon which future assessments of others' genomes are based. Moreover, a consumer purchasing information about his or her genetic ancestry ought to be aware that such information is based on scientific algorithms and computational mathematics that afford inferences between the individual consumer's data and the genomes of one of four statistically constructed, generalized populations (sub-Saharan African, Native American, East Asian, and European).

Another example of how medical evidences are co-constructed is the very notion of a "standard of care." Medical standards used to make decisions about how to care for a patient with colon cancer, for example, are the result of analyses of previous patients' experiences with a particular intervention (to the extent that they are inferred statistically in randomized controlled trials). At the same time that these interventions are introduced into the lives of today's patients, future interventional possibilities for tomorrow's patients are constructed. As additional data becomes available, technical communicators can help with the ongoing and iterative design or tinkering of standard of care protocols. Boundaries between time, place, patient, and provider are muddied in an ethic of care that considers what Karen Barad calls the "lively relationalities of becoming of which we are a part" (393).

Technical communicators play an integral role in highlighting how our entanglements with humans and nonhumans shape acts of diagnosis, prognosis, and treatment.

An ethic of care in an age of commodified health futures ensures that both consumers and care providers are aware of how evidences are neither neutral nor autonomous, but co-constructed phenomena. Technical communicators can facilitate ethical care in this instance by helping to articulate to consumers the construct of biosociality (the co-production of health by biology, technology, and culture) as well as what consent looks like when their individual body data is used to build an international database of genomic information or act as a control for a clinical trial.

3. Health is relational.

Health is not a thing an individual body has. Health is produced through relations between bodies and things. Neoliberal values of personal autonomy, empowerment, and choice lie at the center of the commodification of health futures (many of modern medicine's recent marketing campaigns seem to eschew expertise while championing radical individualism). A quick look under the hood of commodified health futurity, however, reveals the ways in which care is still a set of social, collaboratively constructed practices. Location (e.g., proximity to grocery stores where healthy food is sold), time (e.g., ancestral heritability), and geography (e.g., living along fault lines or near fracking sites) are but three participants that interact with biology in ways that produce health.

Technical communicators play an integral role in highlighting how our entanglements with humans and nonhumans shape acts of diagnosis, prognosis, and treatment. Constant critical attention to the ways in which care is not just a human enterprise, evidences are co-constructed phenomena, and health, in general, is relational provides an ethical framework from which technical communicators and other stakeholders might *care*fully enact methods for tinkering in a "world full of complex ambivalence and shifting tensions."

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Credibility and Ethics in Public Visuals

By KATHRYN NORTHCUT, LORA ARDUSER, T. KENNY FOUNTAIN, MARIA GIGANTE, and CANDICE WELHAUSEN

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BECAUSE BILLBOARDS are predominantly visual and designed to convey succinct messages for passers-by, they allow viewers to create a quick first impression. Even the most elaborate and thoughtful design choices can be immediately digested and evaluated, making the credibility (*ethos*) of the messenger and the message vulnerable to quick dismissal. This article analyzes an anti-drug design (see Figure 1) found on a billboard, from a multi-faceted rhetorical perspective.

Figure 1. "Drugs Destroy Lives" billboard. Photograph ©Kathryn Northcut, 2015

The "Drugs Destroy Lives" Campaign

Law enforcement agencies in rural Missouri perennially face dismal statistics representing human tragedy where drugs are concerned. In Rolla, Missouri, the home of the "Drugs Destroy Lives" billboard and other anti-drug messages, the toll of heroin and methamphetamine addiction, alcoholism, and prescription painkiller abuse is serious and documented (Hackbarth). We commend law enforcement agencies for all efforts that succeed in reducing the amount or severity of drug-related crime in their communities. But when their efforts to reduce crime move from police action into the realm of public discourse, the artifacts that they create become subject to analysis and critique. Such discursive artifacts are a rhetorical display, competing for our attention, demonstrating a version of reality, and asserting claims about the world (Prelli). This article evaluates rhetorical choices made by the producers of the "Drugs Destroy Lives" message. We argue that greater attention to best practices in public health, document design, and rhetoric can yield better documents. We encourage law enforcement agencies to work with technical and health communication programs in their areas to maximize the impact of their rhetorical displays. Their messages can be ethical with respect to meeting professional obligations, while simultaneously enhancing their credibility or *ethos*.

Responses to "Drugs Destroy Lives"

During a discussion of visual document design, Kathryn Northcut brought the Drugs Destroy Lives billboard to the attention of her undergraduate class at Missouri S&T in Rolla, Missouri. After observing negative student reactions to the design, she started to consider the rhetorical mechanisms and effects of the design. With its haunting depiction of a blue face against a high-contrast red background, and strident proclamation that "Drugs Destroy Lives," the message seemed overdone in tone, yet lacking in appeal. Recognizing the limited value of one single response to a single artifact, Northcut and four other rhetoric scholars (Arduser, Fountain, Gigante, and Welhausen) wrote independent analyses that we collaboratively compiled to represent an expert point of view on both the billboard and the challenges of creating documents to reach at-risk drug users.

In short, our responses to the billboard were universally negative. We were neither alone nor first in that assessment. Buzzfeed author Matt Stopera summed up the design with sarcasm: "Brilliant. An ad campaign that could save a generation." As one of us reported, the design scares, which it was perhaps intended to do. Our responses were not focused on addiction or drugs, but rather criticism of the design, in terms that included "visual disaster," "shocking," and "an abomination." As scholars, we examined those judgments using our arsenal of critical rhetorical tools. We focus our evaluation on three areas: the face, the message, and the design.

> Audiences are persuaded when they identify with a message, perceiving that their concerns are the rhetor's concerns.

Characterization of "the Face" by Monty Guy

The most provocative element in the design is the surrealistic image of the face. Described as "blue," "distraught," "extraterrestrial," "human," and "inhuman," the face comes from a painting called "Schism" by artist Monty Guy (Saincome). The face is so odd that the image technology (its type, or *genre*) is not clear; while it is a painting, it is

also mis-identified as a photograph. Guy's hyperrealistic style blurs distinctions between paintings and photographs. Rhetorically, hyperrealism conveys an overwhelming presence and immediacy of the surreal image through both placement in the billboard design and through the medium of illustration itself. Guy's oeuvre is typified by hyperrealistic counter-culture imagery. A portrait of a person holding a gun to his head is currently Guy's Facebook cover photo; tattooed babies and a portrait titled "Let's Be Blunt," depicting a woman smoking a marijuana cigarette, are available for purchase on the *montyguycreates.com* website.

Through his depiction of the human-like yet not-quite-human face, Guy offers us a version of reality that has a more intense effect than an actual photograph or realistic painting of a human. Jean Baudrillard, a postmodern critic, identifies such representations as copies without originals; Umberto Eco warns of a false reality that we consume as if it is real. Guy's painting provides a sensational, shocking image, replacing any actual-yet-mundane images we might associate with drug use, rendering reality pointless. The use of the image by law enforcement agencies supplants the reality of drug use with an altogether different narrative. Their story offers a haggard face, destroyed by drugs, juxtaposed to symbols of compassionate yet faceless agencies.

Whole-Message Interpretations

As rhetoricians, we fixate on questions of audience and message. Audiences are persuaded when they identify with a message, perceiving that their concerns are the rhetor's concerns. This billboard forges a sense of identification not with the potential or current drug user who may need the help, but between law enforcement and the community concerned with drug abuse. The caption "Drugs Destroy Lives" is so overblown (*hyperbole*) that it seems to oversimplify the reality of the community's drug issues in the same way as other platitudes: "A stitch in time saves nine!" True, perhaps, but not all stitches, not all times, and not necessarily nine. The reality is that not all drugs destroy all lives, but this design asserts that the damage from drugs is absolute and irreversible.

Similar critiques of the ineffectiveness of national anti-drug campaigns have been published in the public health literature (for example, see Fishbein et al. and Kelder et al.). The consensus is that testing of public health messages for effects on target audiences is essential; the process can include expert review, focus groups, and both experimental and quasi-experimental studies (Kelder et al.). National campaigns ideally employ testing of large numbers of participants, and they examine metrics such as perceived realism, learning of message, and negative and positive emotional responses (Fishbein et al.).

Especially in the absence of such pre-distribution research, messages risk miscommunication. Drug users may fail to identify with the words "Drugs Destroy Lives" and "We care" as much as with the painted image in the picture. Attempts to reach drug users themselves (ostensibly, a logical target audience) would need to be couched in the needs, experiences, and viewpoints of that audience. A call to action should exist; such a statement would clarify the message by pointing directly to the drug user or addict as the primary audience. In stasis theory terms, a call to action is a higher order stasis than stating of facts and purporting consequences. For example, the reader might be exhorted to "call 555-DRUG for help now!" Perhaps, because of the realities of drug-related convictions and sentencing, amnesty or protection from prosecution could be offered as an enticement to seek help. Such information would provide a clearer answer to the question, "care about what?"

The consensus is that testing of public health messages for effects on target audiences is essential; the process can include expert review, focus groups, and both experimental and quasi-experimental studies.

Ultimately, the message that law enforcement cares about the drug user is damaged by the image and the platitude "We care." Coming below such an incredulous message, the assertion that "law enforcement cares" risks trivializing both the drug user and the law enforcement agencies. While the agencies may profess to care about a drug addict, their concern will not help the fictional subject depicted; public audiences might reasonably expect law enforcement personnel to take specific and direct action benefitting real people in the community.

The prominence of the "We care" message before the list of badges centralizes the law enforcement agencies' roles in the message, and acts as a signature connoting authorship of the billboard message. The billboard's promotional purpose overshadows its altruistic public-health message; rather than reaching out to affected members of the community, the billboard employs the drug problem as a vehicle for self-promotion by the law enforcement agencies. Those agencies risk losing credibility if viewers perceive them as exploiting the drug problem for their own public relations purposes.

Visual Design Flaws

All authors commented on the document design strategies employed in the billboard. Garish colors, automatically generated effects such as gradients and blurred edges, and decorative fonts (one is outlined Papyrus) prompted a wide spectrum of negative comments. As instructors of document design, some of us went so far as to suggest

that the design was slapped together, amateurish, and problematic even as a draft.

Simple, high-impact messages need both imagery and typography that contribute to *gravitas*, a sense of importance. While the *gravitas*-heavy Haettenschweiler would be an equally poor choice for different reasons, a professional, bold font could be chosen for the text once the problems with the phrasing were resolved. To convey a stronger sense of empathy, a concrete image that the law enforcement agencies actually do care about might be depicted. A carefully chosen photograph of a person rather than a hyperrealistic painting may be more effective.

Simple, high-impact messages need both imagery and typography that contribute to *gravitas*, a sense of importance.

Conclusion

Best practices for rhetorical display exist in the fields of public health, document design, and technical communication. While our interpretations are informed by our experience with similar artifacts and reports of anti-drug message testing (such as by Schriver), we would consider "Drugs Destroy Lives" to be an object lesson for the importance of tapping into the best practices of expert domains when developing literature for public display.

The Drugs Destroy Lives billboard represents a missed opportunity for local agencies to tap into local talent for improved outcomes. The opportunity, however, is not the responsibility of the police alone. Students and faculty at universities can actively seek partnerships in the community, and clearly law enforcement provides some high-stakes and highly visible challenges. We suggest several potential collaborative scenarios:

- Agency officials partner with students in communications courses to invent, test, and implement public service campaigns.
- Students in document design courses create prototypes of designs for review by agency officials.
- Students in research methods courses conduct interviews, focus groups, and surveys about public service announcements prior to release of final versions.
- Members of student STC chapters partner with municipal agencies to design, test, and implement public documents including websites and billboards.
- Local agencies, students, and professionals in the community team up to launch campaigns that effectively reach at-risk populations in their areas.

Especially in moments of increased tension between law enforcement and the public, and when hot-button topics like drug abuse are concerned, technical communicators have obvious and valuable contributions to make in the realm of public discourse.

This collaborative effort took root at the 2014 Rocky Mountain Writer's Retreat in Grand Lake, Colorado, organized by Amy Koerber. Editorial guidance from Derek Ross improved the article considerably.

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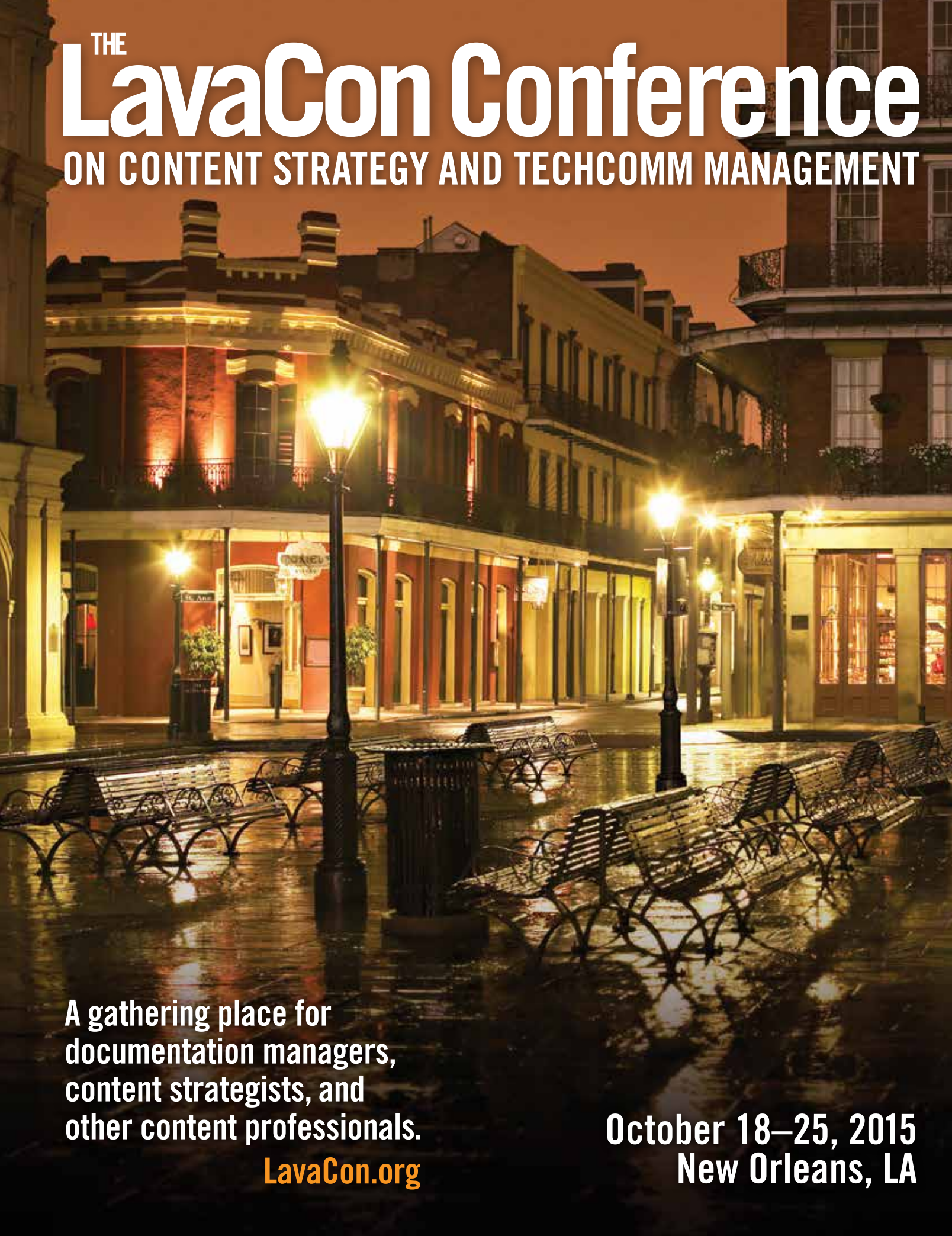
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Let's Talk about Jane: The Ethics of "Other" Knowledge

By STEPHEN CARRADINI

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WHO CREATES KNOWLEDGE? Where do we find expertise? What technological practices benefit technical communicators? Does knowledge arrive in a top-down manner from professors to students, or do practicing writers who experiment with new things create it from the bottom up? Where do subject matter experts come in? These epistemological questions run deep through our field. The nature of technical communicators' responses to these questions shape the way we view technical communication and how we develop new knowledge. Practitioners, researchers, and students of technical communication have an ethical duty to continually interrogate our epistemologies and look toward "other" ways of doing things as we attempt to understand, apprehend, and translate an ever-shifting world for an ever-shifting audience.

Let's Talk About Jane

Jane is an aspiring professional independent musician who wants to go on tour. She has an audience of several thousand people that she has built up through local shows and online networking. To learn how to book a tour, she searches "DIY tour booking" in a search engine. Clicking on a result brings her to *IndieOnTheMove.com*, a platform that hosts venue information. She clicks around and finds some potential venues she could play, then stumbles across a blog post with step-by-step instructions for contacting venue bookers. She reads the post, then writes several emails using the strategies she has read about. She throws in some of her own humorous flair.

In a few days, Jane hears back from a venue in a nearby state that will let her open for another band. She posts this information to her Facebook and Twitter accounts, then sends out an email newsletter using MailChimp. Jane uses that show as a springboard to book a small tour, then another, then several more over the years. As she gains experience, she responds with advice to tweets and Facebook messages of younger artists about touring. After giving similar answers a few times, she documents on her personal blog the methods that she has tweaked via repeated practice. Now she can link people to the blog post for answers to basic questions and answer the harder ones herself.

Jane isn't in the field of technical communication, but she is interacting with, creating, and disseminating specialist information related to specific, technologically-mediated tasks. She uses search engines, knowledge bases, blogs, and instructions; she develops a social media presence, and writes email, newsletters, and documentation. These tasks should sound familiar, as they include the sorts of tasks that technical communicators often do.

Learning from Jane

What should technical communicators learn from Jane, if anything? How can the accumulated experience of booking several tours (a complex, situated, mediated, online task) translate to the work that technical communicators do? Should researchers be looking at emergent communication practices in fields other than our own for knowledge

that technical communicators can take away? Should scholars be teaching the insights learned by practitioners of other fields, fields that don't share our ethics or epistemologies? In short, does booking a tour online matter to technical communication?

It's a sticky question. Even though the classes in various technical communication programs may differ, technical communicators have developed a set of pedagogical concerns that include the ethics of doing work. Most musicians aren't technical communicators, and they don't know the things we know—nor do many of us know their world. They don't have our ethical structures. What if the things they know, the ways they get things done, go against our ethical structures or our best practices? How do we square our knowledge of how we do things with the practices that are effective in other fields—practices that may make us more effective? How do we keep technical communication distinctive without missing the boat on something valuable? How do we understand, evaluate, and incorporate these sorts of actions, practices, and (ultimately) epistemologies into technical communication? Should we? How? When?

People complicate the narratives that we have about technical communication. And that's a good thing. This article is more about questions than answers. I don't have all the answers to the questions I'm presenting, although I do have some suggestions.

My Questions and Suggestions

What if Jane lies about her audience size in a particular city to get access? What if she uses vague language and stretches things a bit to convince a booker who doesn't know how she'll fit with a show? The types of communication that Jane uses may be instrumental in their design, not taking into account the situation that the reader is in. We do not want to emulate the types of communication which might make us think, "That's why technical communication exists, right there." Some communicative practices outside our field do deserve a "harrumph" and no more.

But what if there are things to learn? Social media is a growing field in technical communication. Jane lives and dies by her social media, as it is a direct connection to her fans. What strategies does she use to connect with her audience most effectively? How is she communicating valuable information about when a show starts, where the new music can be heard, and how to pre-order a t-shirt?

There may be emergent strategies of use that develop in ad hoc ways, mature through repeated use, and result in effective communication. If technical communicators want to be the best social media communicators we can be, perhaps we need to know how we can use and adapt those strategies. Perhaps we can learn about rapid dissemination of information through early adopter artists who

Technical communicators have developed a set of pedagogical concerns that include the ethics of doing work.

have to teach their users how to navigate the software and platforms implemented. Perhaps the nature of the instructions that Jane used has something to teach technical communicators about instruction writing in a digital era (as Derek Van Ittersum's 2014 article on Instructables notes).

We don't have to look so far afield to find the difficulty of top-down/bottom-up knowledge. How do we understand the relationship of users in software help forums to the company whose products they are giving information about? Sometimes these users give wrong information. Sometimes they give complex, innovative, "correct" information that doesn't meet our expectations. Are users to be studied, taught, or both? With so many people involved in communicating about technical information, the need to understand as much as we can about the process is imperative. Where do we look for this research? Do we look in organizations? Outside organizations, to freelance and contract workers? Far afield, in fields seemingly tenuously related to technical communication? These are questions that we must ponder; we have an ethical obligation to interrogate where legitimate knowledge creation comes from in our field. If we uncritically proceed with one answer (any answer), we may miss out on developing strategies.

For technical communication to have responsible epistemology and ethical practices, we must continue to interrogate where knowledge comes from. In the digital era, information can come from many places: on scales of formal to informal, classroom to workplace, online to offline, technical communication to things very much not technical communication at all. As researchers consider what to study and practitioners think about their best practices, we must keep our eyes open to the types of communication practices that will benefit us, no matter where those tools come from. In a field that looks to communicate information about the technology that is currently turning up in every aspect of life—from health to weather to shoes to our very brains—we should not turn our noses up quickly. Instead, we should be inquisitive about what we can take away from practices similar to and different from our own.

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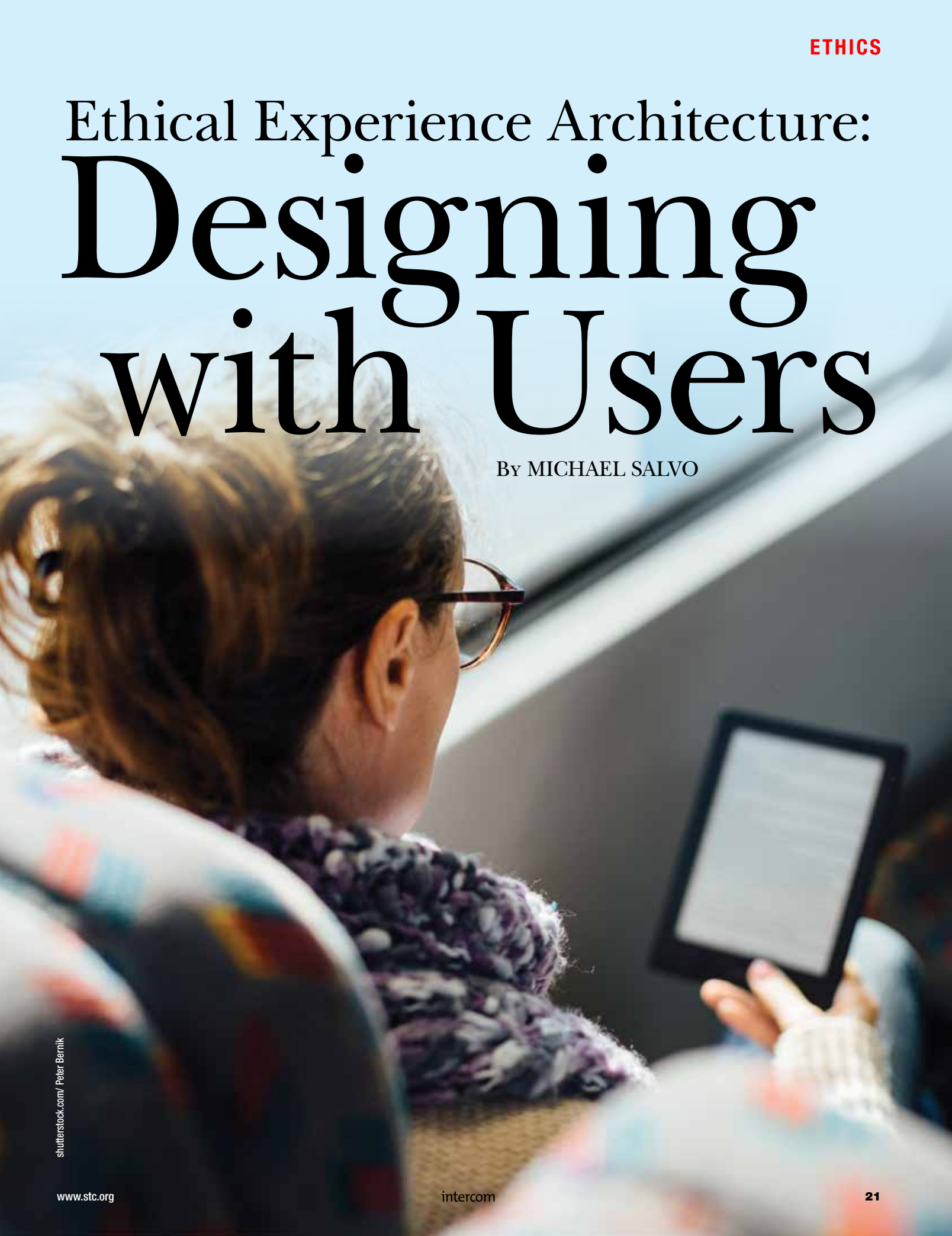
Ethical Experience Architecture: Designing with Users

By MICHAEL SALVO



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IN THE YEARS since it was built, Frank Lloyd Wright's Fallingwater in Stewart Township, Pennsylvania, has become a kind of Modernist Disney World. Trams shuttle sunburnt tourists from the extensive parking lots to the entryway. Signage points the way to the ticket booth to be divested of burdensome cash as visitors are ushered into the hushed lush green garden and amble toward the building.

Wright and the modernists were not without their own ethics: Wright believed he was on the path of improving human existence by bringing more light into homes, improving how we utilized space by designing it for the lives we wished we lived.

I was aware that Fallingwater has been periodically closed and partially inaccessible for repairs. Wrights' failures: the foundation is crumbling at Fallingwater. The insides of this house are gorgeous. They are beautiful. But no one actually lives the way Wright insisted they live. You have to live a Wright life, the right life, to survive the imposition of the architecture upon you.

Fulfilling my role as tourist, I was taking many pictures and began to notice how many problems, minor and major, were visible. There were numerous patches: reconstruction work on cement and plaster exterior structures. The building has been standing 80 years—since the late 1930s. Some of these problems—mostly water damage—stemmed from the fact that Wright did not take into account elements like water's impact on the materials he had chosen. Without constant and continuous upkeep, Fallingwater would have already fallen down. *Fallenwater.*

There are stalactites growing from the structures connecting the walkway from the guesthouse to the main house. The minerals are eating the structure. This is a damp little valley; at the time it was barely drizzling, and there was substantial water washing down the rock face—more than a ripple but not a torrent. Over time, I can see the supports bridging the walkway channeling the water into and onto the braces, creating the seepage that results in these stalactites of dripstone. I am watching it happen; I have no architectural training. I am just watching the relationship between limestone, water, and cement, watching the structure slowly erode, slowly bubble, slowly wash away.

The theory of Fallingwater is beautiful. Its reality is less harmonious. It ignores its natural context and fights against nature, pretending limestone and water do not result in small amounts of carbonic acid. Perhaps taking pains to redirect water away from the limestone, accounting for the water table, and directing the flows to the creek without flowing on, over, and through parts of the structure itself is all that's really necessary. But I am not an architectural historian. I simply want to point out this gap between theory and application, a failure of praxis, to account for the impacts of water and limestone on cement structure.

Fallingwater Is a Failure

The building is a failure because it isn't doing what it was built to do: it is only a monument to modernist architectural genius. Nor has the building really changed human behavior or patterns of action—*habitués.* At night, Fallingwater is silent: nobody lives here. And it is perhaps good for the rural Pennsylvania economy when the ski slopes aren't open, and iron is no longer poured in Pittsburgh's foundries, that this site is an architectural amusement park, attracting thousands upon thousands to gawk. Perhaps it's better than letting the limestone molder and the supports collapse, letting the vines pull apart the mortar, and the trees crash through the skylights. At least at Fallingwater, all these people have changed their behavior to witness, to travel, to make a pilgrimage to the high church of Frank Lloyd Wright as it struggles to survive against topography, geology, and chemistry.

But Wright and the modernists were not without their own ethics: Wright believed he was on the path of improving human existence by bringing more light into homes, improving how we utilized space by designing it for the lives we wished we lived—or more accurately, the lives he imagined we should live. He also imagined entire suburbs: his Usonian homes and Broadacre City. Corbusier in France believed his designs could decrease domestic violence. Neither architect consulted with their users, but rather designed spaces, artifacts, processes, and technologies for users, and to change the behavior of users, without consulting the users themselves. Perhaps my rant applies to modernist thinkers in general. Even the binary distinction, separating users from producers, feels dated.

Users and/with Producers

Instead of a user-producer binary, current practice insists on iterative design wedded to participatory culture. In part, this shift from designing *for* to designing *with* technological consumers recognizes both the high cost of technological design and development, and the even higher cost of product failure, as well as always-faster contemporary software design. "Facebook," for example, "will never be finished." Interestingly, the source of this quote is in question. It is given to Jesse Eisenberg, the actor playing Mark Zuckerberg in 2010's movie *The Social Network*, and it captures the social networking phenomenon, but Zuckerberg has not been directly quoted. He has said things like it, but the phrase has never been directly tied to him. Somehow Facebook manages to upset users with

each change while Amazon launches new features and redesigns and products without raising user hackles. It is old news: new tools will never be finished, and versions will proliferate in ever-maddening new cycles of almost-finished "stable" builds where the new tool is the error-reporting dialogue box. After a crash, users are offered the opportunity to report the crash with varying levels of contextual information provided.

Participatory culture and iterative prototyping already reveal some of their faults, and their shortcomings. But the strengths, as Huatong Sun's work attests (See Sun 2006, 2012), not only complete the cultural circuit so dear to cultural studies theorists, but also make complex systems *robust* (see Nassim Taleb's *Antifragile*). In short, building vigorous systems involves redundancy, clarity, and effective use of what Peter Moreville and Thomas Rickert independently articulate as *ambient data*. Sun's articulation of the *cultural circuit* is important not because of the new annoyances that frequent updates and user input strategies reveal, but because the contrast created by valuing the continued input and using that input to impact the design and functionality of the artifact continues to distinguish postmodern design from modern design, and at least gestures toward a contemporary design ethic.

Sun's research articulates culturally embedded technology design. She builds her authority partly through including many examples of designers engaged with users and participants. Engagement with technology and people demonstrates the profound impact closing the cultural circuit has had on the design of technologies. It is participation borne of valuing users, valuing participants, and of engaging those people in discussion. It moves toward dialogic engagement with partners. Seen in this way, arguments for usability and participatory design share common ancestry with those posited for accessible and simple language. These discourses, these design languages, concern themselves with an ethical engagement with otherness and the ethical burden of understanding and hearing multiple voices of culture that are not often heard. It is the voice of the subaltern, or the voice of the Other, those people and populations often not engaged in dialogue with economically empowered communities and organizations.

We have to learn to hear into the interstitial silences and to value the voices of those traditionally unheard, or silenced. Designing for and with disabled and differently-abled users—Universal Design—then also becomes part of a larger discourse not only of ethical and culturally attuned artifact creation, a method for design, but part of a larger societal concern with inclusion and dignity, more broadly construed.

Behavioral Innovation

How is it that Facebook manages to upset its participants with each change, each introduction of new features and taxonomies, and reworked navigation pathways and organizational taxonomies? In contrast, how does Amazon continue to innovate without upsetting users, while making dramatic changes to expected patterns of use? Interestingly, and in contrast to Facebook, Amazon demands payment for its services. In fact, millions of Amazon customers pay an annual fee for access to premium Amazon services, while Facebook is aggressive in its assertion that everyday participants do not pay and will not pay.

By defining its relationship with its participants as explicitly commercial, Amazon defines its interaction as transactional and, if dissatisfied, *customers* can complain and receive monetary compensation in recognition. The real economic exchange limits the relationship to one of commerce, and it seems participants understand their role in this context: they are consumers, customers, and they produce responses in the form of reviews about products. The cultural circuit, though closely circumscribed, is also comprehended by participants as well as by Amazon employees (note that I have kept aside Amazon's labor relations and a growing number of worker complaints). But the relationship between Amazon and its participants is a familiar one: people transfer their understanding of commercial interactions across the virtual boundary and play the accustomed role of customer, with added benefits of digital communication, data-driven logistics, and infinite-seeming selection.

> These modern architects are celebrated precisely for the wrong reasons, as they sought to discipline the human users of their designs rather than design spaces that accommodated human desire and activities.

Facebook, on the other hand, has blazed new territory and gets punished for innovation. It isn't that the organization has failed to clearly define roles for itself. Rather, there are no models for understanding the complex and sometimes conflicting actions taken by different parts of a large and new bureaucracy. As maintainer and administrator of the interface for our friendships, opinion-sharing, picture-sharing, and humble-bragging, the social and cultural interests are sometimes in conflict with its publicly traded stock, commercial interface, and company identity. Google, with its famous, or infamous, promise to "not be evil," has run into similar challenges. Facebook users seem to get angry precisely when change to the interface and/or functionality remind them that their participation, their opinions, their interactions, and their attention are—sometimes seemingly magically—turned into a commercial product that make Facebook worth (currently) 160 billion

dollars (versus Amazon, which is currently worth about 158 billion, according to Forbes). But these are the new, emergent concerns: both organizations successfully invent new experience architecture.

Things, Space, Ethics, Design

In including the long description of structural failures at Fallingwater above, I want to call attention to the structural problems that genius-centered design reveals, as well as the power dynamics it conceals. Wright had lofty goals, driving both architecture and the people inhabiting the structures he designed to prescribed behaviors. All architectures encourage and discourage behaviors—Donald Norman called them *forcing functions* in 1988, and this terminology remains in the latest revised edition of the book (Norman 1988, 2013). Norman's user-centered design has been important as design attention shifted in the late 20th century from things to screens, from devices and artifacts to interfaces and virtual places. As we move back to artifacts—things—and then to larger places and spaces, the lessons culled from explorations of virtual space can similarly be transcribed from the virtual back to the physical, with all that we learned about encouraging and valuing participation.

The ability to recognize, acknowledge, value, and include those traditionally excluded from the design of artifacts has to be transported back to design in the real world, informed by the driving participatory ethic of user-centered design. There can be no return to the designer-centered visions of Frank Lloyd Wright, Corbusier, or Albert Speer. These modern architects are celebrated precisely for the wrong reasons, as they sought to discipline the human users of their designs rather than design spaces that accommodated human desire and activities. Aggressively, judgmentally, deciding which human activities and appetites were permissible in a Usonian home, in Broadacre, or as Corbusier was fond of saying, "Revolution or Architecture." No revolutionary, his saying was a warning that, without modern architecture, there would be social revolution and disharmony among social classes unless design was used as a social balm.

Explicitly rhetorical, explicitly ethical: experience architecture self-consciously accepts it is engaged in fraught territory and invites participants into the process of design. It values a completed cultural circuit, meaning that some expertise, specialty, and professional status accrues to producers, but this status comes with responsibility for those participating and dwelling within the designed artifact. It implies both an ethic to attend to the voices present among participants as well as an ethic of care that requires translation of the stated needs of participants into palpable change of the experience of the artifact. Experience architecture also recognizes that design for the virtual and for the physical are mutually informing and mutually reinforcing.

To design means to accept responsibility for articulating competing and contradictory voices and accounting for a range of values, turning what traditional systems of communication might label noise into signal, and to listen into the interstitial silences in order to hear new modes of discourse—a far cry from designing high-rise towers to literally lift privileged citizens above the city. Architecture need not be an imposition of wealth and power upon silenced masses of people, but rather acknowledge the many competing stakeholders of the city, of technologies, and that wealth and power flows throughout culture, connecting producers and consumers, blurring boundaries between them, and acknowledging there are technologies and techniques that require both accountability and change.

The boundaries blur between the producers and consumers—prosumers—as well as between the powerful and the disempowered. It is an age of asymmetrical warfare as well as asymmetrical cultural exchange and communication, beyond broadcast into peer-to-peer.

I wonder about Fallingwater moldering in the Pennsylvania hills. Is it, rightfully, a monument to a way of designing that has now passed, or is it a reminder of what to avoid moving forward? Is it a reminder of the height of modernist hubris from the industrial age, a fitting atheist temple declaiming the decontextualized aims of a lost time? Does it remind us to listen more closely and attentively for the voices that might not otherwise be useful for establishing robust, sustainable architectures and the experiences these human-designed environments support?

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The author wishes to thank John Sherrill for his timely input.

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Everyday Ethics and the Practicing Communicator

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By KELSEY LOFTIN and MYLES CRYER

TECHNICAL COMMUNICATORS MAKE ethical decisions every day, even though sometimes we might not recognize them as such. From signing off on word choice and phrasing to removing or redacting information, from deciding how to visually present complex data to choosing which images are appropriate for certain projects, ethical decisions permeate every aspect of our profession.

In 1998, the Society for Technical Communication adopted a set of ethical principles that embody what we as technical communicators strive to uphold in our everyday professional activities. Each technical communicator faces different ethical challenges in his or her day-to-day work. Although many of the ethical issues we face may feel mundane, it is important to understand the technical communicator's critical role in ensuring that public good is upheld and that we honor both our profession and the stakeholders who rely on our work.

In the following article, we offer a few common scenarios that technical communicators encounter every day as related to the six ethical principles set forth by STC. In doing so, we hope to help professional communicators better prepare for the everyday ethical decisions that make up so much of our work, because while our choices may appear mundane, even the smallest decisions may have large implications.

Legality

We observe the laws and regulations governing our profession.

You are working with the product marketing manager (PMM) to iron out the messaging at the beginning of your data sheet. You have sent the latest draft to the legal department, and they changed "ensure" to "make sure" to protect the company from inadvertently guaranteeing to provide a service it is not prepared to deliver. The PMM is concerned that the messaging doesn't flow as well as it did before the change and rejects the comment in track changes, moving the project forward with the original verbiage in place.

Honesty

We seek to promote the public good in our activities. To the best of our ability, we provide truthful and accurate communications.

As a major incident manager (MIM), you direct the technical experts in the field while communicating progress and problems to the customer. You are under a great deal

of pressure to meet service level agreements (SLAs) and to provide the customer with hourly updates. The content of your communications must be vetted by the team to solidify rhetoric and verbiage before it is sent to the customer. Not only do these actions happen rapidly, but there are various hands in the editing process. You are new to the team and are taking notes during the technical conference call. One of the senior MIMs tells you to remove something from the customer communication because "the customer doesn't need to know that." The rest of the team agrees, and someone points out that you have two minutes to send the update. But as you look at the update from the customer's viewpoint, the omitted content appears to be business-critical information.

Confidentiality

We respect the confidentiality of our clients, employers, and professional organizations.

You are preparing a customer-facing PowerPoint deck that focuses on the capabilities of your company's improved remote desktop service. The engineering team has built a demo environment for the sales team to present to prospects that includes data from a current customer in order to establish a genuine use case, and the team has provided you with screenshots to include in your PowerPoint deck. As you are working on the deck, you notice that IP addresses, user names, and confidential security configurations are shown in many of the screenshots. In order to protect your client's confidentiality and to prevent any possible security breaches, you present your concerns to the engineering team and suggest that they create dummy data specifically for the demo environment. The project deadline is fast approaching, and there are still a number of features left to finalize. Engineering is reluctant to spend time building a clean data set and insists that perfecting the new features should remain their top priority.

Quality

We endeavor to produce excellence in our communication products.

There is a lot of pressure on you from the product manager (PM) to publish core customer-facing documents before the big launch. However, you didn't receive the information you needed from the engineering team to complete the documents until the last minute. You finish the documents and send them to the PM for review, and in the same email you remind him that the documents need to be sent through corporate editing before you can publish. He signs off on the documents and pushes you to publish while the documents are under review because the launch is in two days, and corporate editing can take up to a week to respond.

Fairness

We serve the business interests of our clients and employers as long as they are consistent with the public good.

You work as a researcher for a prominent senator, and she has asked for a condensed report on the latest scientific findings surrounding climate change and the most trusted measurements for tracking atmospheric trends. While she did not directly ask you to present the information in a way that supports her widely known opinion, you have heard stories of other researchers who were demoted to less exciting projects after producing reports that did not align to her fixed view. Scientists have found that the most reliable way to track climate change trends is over a period of decades, which reveals results that differ from the senator's opinion. However, the majority of the available reports you have found present yearly trend results over a much narrower period of 17 years. Every trend graph in these reports begins with the same record high year, manipulating the data to show a steady drop in global temperatures.

Professionalism

We advance technical communication through our integrity and excellence in performing each task we undertake.

You are nearing the end of a freelance project designing a website for a small startup company, and you realize you still have placeholder images on a few pages. The client requested that you use specific images and agreed to send them weeks ago. You follow up with the client and receive the pictures later that day, but the file names suggest that they are screenshots. You ask your client about the origin of the images, and he confirms that they are screenshots taken from a stock photography website. You explain that using the images in your design would result in copyright infringement and offer to track down the images so your client can purchase the rights. He maintains that he has never paid for such generic stock photography and none of the designers he has worked with in the past ever had an issue.

These six scenarios represent common challenges that many technical communicators face on a daily basis. How would you respond? When we encounter similar situations in our own work, it is important for each of us to take a moment and use our expertise to carefully and thoughtfully consider all possible outcomes and repercussions, especially under a tight deadline.

For professionals in our field, STC's ethical principles provide a framework for making informed decisions that balance stakeholder needs, business requirements, and the public good. Because the scenarios we have described above are commonplace in our profession, it is our hope that by preemptively thinking through possible responses, you will be empowered to make more informed ethical decisions when the situation demands. i

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STC Awards and Honors

EACH YEAR, *Intercom* highlights all individual and community awards and honors in a special section of the magazine. The members, chapters, and SIGS listed on these pages are the best and brightest our Society has to offer. They are at the forefront of our great profession, and we congratulate all of them on their success.

Please watch the STC website in the coming weeks for announcements on next year's awards and honors and how you can nominate yourself or a deserving colleague for 2016.

Introducing the New STC Fellows and Associate Fellows

STC IS PLEASED to announce that 15 distinguished members have been named Fellows and Associate Fellows of the Society. They will be recognized at the 2015 STC Summit in Columbus, OH.

STC awards the rank of Associate Fellow to Senior Members who have attained distinction in the field of technical communication.

The rank of STC Fellow is conferred upon Associate Fellows who have attained such eminence in the field of technical communication that the Board deems them worthy of being singled out as one of the select few who have distinguished the Society and the profession.

Congratulations to all the honorees, listed below with the preliminary citation. And thank you to both the Fellows Committee (Cindy Currie, Phylise Banner, John Hedtke, and Larry Kunz) and the Associate Fellows Committee (Brian Lindgren, Lisa Cook, Alan Houser, Deirdre (De) Murr, Thea Telch, and Carolyn Watt).

Fellows

Elizabeth Kent
Citation: For continuing contributions and service to her chapter as a competition manager, volunteer, and historian, and for tirelessly sharing knowledge and skills with other writers.

Nathaniel Lim
Citation: For tirelessly and enthusiastically helping people get maximum value from STC, especially for leading the International Summit Awards competition and for championing the Summit conference.

Edward Marshall
Citation: For being a thought leader in technical communication, promoting developments in technology, and sharing knowledge and methods with peers to facilitate the advancement of technical communication.

Lori Meyer
Citation: For outstanding service to multiple STC communities and to the Society as a whole; for achieving distinction as an innovator and pioneer in her service to STC and in her professional career.

Robert G. Young
Citation: For his continuing enthusiastic contributions to his community and the profession as a writer and mentor, and for devoted and passionate service to the Society.

Associate Fellows

Ramesh Aiyyangar
Citation: For continuously and passionately promoting the profession of technical communication in India, support of its practitioners worldwide, and for dedicated and conscientious service as a Society leader.

A. Ugur Akinci
Citation: For technical communication leadership through multiple media, passionate outreach to students, and encouragement and support of the profession in the Washington DC–Baltimore Chapter and local communities.

Francis Bao
Citation: For passionate and relentless promotion of the profession of technical communication, elearning practitioners, editors, translators and for distinguished service as a Society leader.

Nicki L. Davis
Citation: For continuous, passionate dedication to the cause of making technology more accessible through improved documentation and user interface design, and a solid commitment to the profession and the Society.

MaryKay Grueneberg
Citation: For exceptional effort in the support and promotion of technical communication, continued contributions to the Society and the Chicago Chapter, and a never-ending support of fellow practitioners.

Sally Henschel
Citation: For extraordinary contributions to students, the Academic SIG, the Society, and the field of technical communication, while demonstrating a rare level of commitment, quality, and care to all endeavors.

Sheila Loring
Citation: For commitment to excellence in the technical communication field, enthusiastic leadership in the Carolina Chapter, and providing technical communicators with career development opportunities.

Anna Parker
Citation: For exemplary work in promoting the value of technical communication in both corporate and academic venues, willingness to share professional expertise with others, and continued service to the Society.

Kimberly Rosenlof
Citation: For passionate advocacy of the profession of technical communication and willingness and commitment to serve the Society and the Phoenix Chapter.

Amy Vogt
Citation: For enthusiastic promotion of technical communication and Society membership to colleagues and students, outstanding implementation of technical communication principles in training courses, and for exemplary leadership in the Northeast Ohio Chapter.

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Intercom Outstanding Article and Guest-Edited Issue Awards

STC GIVES OUT two awards for the exemplary work published in *Intercom*: the best article of the year and the best guest-edited issue of the year. This year's judging team for the awards consisted of Liz Herman, Beth Agnew, Barrie Byron, and Alan Houser.

The judges are pleased to announce that the *Intercom* Outstanding Article Award goes to Rick Lippincott for his article, "We Explain Things" in the April 2014 issue of *Intercom*. The citation reads:
For a realistic-yet-positive view of the importance of our profession and how technical communicators facilitate technological change. Expressing both the foundations of our past and a hopeful look forward as we engage with the future, this article reinforces our value to society and our shared experience as technical communicators, regardless of industry or medium.

The *Intercom* Outstanding Guest-Edited Issue Award goes to Tom Johnson for his guest-edited September 2014 issue, with a theme of "API Documentation." The citation reads:
For guest-editing an issue of *Intercom* that contributes to the professional development of technical communicators by delivering valuable information that appeals to both the novice and the veteran technical communicator. This comprehensive issue showcases articles that enlighten and educate readers with useful examples and context for application, as well as effective strategies for practitioners to implement.

Congratulations to both honorees.

Sigma Tau Chi

STC SPONSORS SIGMA TAU CHI (STX) to recognize exemplary technical communication students in baccalaureate or graduate programs.

STX recognizes students enrolled in technical communication programs who have a cumulative grade point average of 3.5 or above, are exemplary in participation in STC, and demonstrate a potential for significant contribution to the profession. The committee this year includes Russel Hirst and Tiffany Bourelle.

This year, one student rose above and received this honor. Congratulations to Michelle Malkasian of Portland State University!

Jay R. Gould Award

THE JAY R. GOULD Award for Excellence in Teaching Technical Communication honors the distinguished teaching career of the late Professor Gould, whose academic mentorship guided many into the technical communication profession. To be eligible for the award, a nominee must have been a member of the Society for Technical Communication for at least 10 years and must have been involved in postsecondary education for at least 15 years. The committee this year includes Tharon Howard, Thomas Barker, and Kirk St.Amant.

This year's winners are:
Sally Henschel
Russel Hirst

The citations read:

Sally Henschel
For her innovations in teaching and her active and personal mentoring of graduate and undergraduate students in technical communication. She models what we want our students to aim to become.

Russel Hirst
For his dedication to student success through innovative teaching, a collaborative approach to learning, inspiring mentoring, and a commitment to excellence in all aspects of technical communication education.

Congratulations to Sally and Russel for their honors.

Frank R. Smith Award

EACH YEAR, the editor of *Technical Communication* appoints a judging committee to select the outstanding article from the previous year's issues. Judges base their decisions on article content and form. The award honors the memory of Frank R. Smith, during whose 18-year tenure as editor *Technical Communication* became established as the flagship publication of STC and the profession. This year's judging team for the Frank R. Smith competition consisted of Jackie Damrau, Lisa Meloncon, and Kirk St.Amant.

The judges are pleased to announce that the Frank R. Smith Outstanding Article Award goes to Leo R. Lentz, Henk L.W. Pander Maat, and Ted J.M. Sanders for their article, "Towards Evidence-Based Writing Decisions: The Knowledge Base Comprehensible Text" in the February 2014 issue of *Technical Communication*.

The citation reads:
For research that contributes to academic and industry practices in ways that can foster meaningful discussions across the field.

In addition, the judges also named a Distinguished Article for the year. This honor goes to Saul Carliner, Adnan Qayyum, and Juan Carlos Sanchez-Lozano for their article, "What Measures of Productivity and Effectiveness Do Technical Communication Managers Track and Report?" in the May 2014 issue of *Technical Communication*.

The citation reads:
For research that advances our understanding of how technical communicators contribute value to organizations.

Congratulations to all the honorees.

Ken Rainey Award

THE KEN RAINEY AWARD for Excellence in Research was established by STC in 2006 to celebrate and honor Professor Ken Rainey's passion for research that results in improvements to technical communication, especially to practice. The goal of the award is to encourage quality and excellence in technical communication research by honoring those whose research studies have made an outstanding contribution to the field. The committee for this year's award is Nancy Coppola, Michael Albers, Ann M. Blakeslee, and Patricia Egan.
This year's winner is Kirk St.Amant.
The citation reads:

Kirk St.Amant
For his focused, original, and significant research program that has yielded a superb publication record and a well-deserved national and international reputation in the field.

Congratulations to Kirk for this well-deserved honor.

STC Affinity Program

Take advantage of member-only discounts

Community Achievement Awards

THE COMMUNITY ACHIEVEMENT Awards (CAA) program recognizes STC Chapters and Special Interest Groups (SIGs) for exceptional accomplishments in meeting Society goals. The awards not only acknowledge that the obligations of a properly functioning community have been met, but that the winning communities have performed well beyond expectations.

The awards program recognizes, in a visible and meaningful manner, communities that demonstrate outstanding, innovative, and sustained performance in advancing the goals of the Society. STC recognizes the following communities for their efforts. Thank you to the committee, Tricia Spayer, Maryann Bowen, MaryKay Grueneberg, Mak Pandit, and Jamye Sagan.

Communities of Distinction

Carolina
For providing value to your members and furthering the profession of technical communication through frequent and diverse educational programs, networking and outreach efforts, and innovative implementation of your mentoring program.

Chicago
For revitalizing your community through increased activities, for boosting the student community through the Get Real Interview Program and expanded scholarships program, and for active participation in the larger community through Chicago Alliance Strategic Planning.

Houston
For setting an outstanding example of leadership and planning, for providing excellent programming, and for starting an impressive mentoring program.

Northeast Ohio
For providing value to members beyond your chapter's geographic boundaries and helping to secure the future of technical communication through excellent programming, award-winning communications, and outstanding sponsorship efforts.

Orlando Central Florida
For being committed to your members' needs by continuing to be an active community, by sharing resources with other communities, and by expanding your offerings to your members.

Phoenix
For hosting the STC 2014 Annual Summit, for serving the community through innovative events like Helvetica, and for your hard work making STC Phoenix one of the most vibrant communities within STC.

Texas Tech University
For developing the future of technical communication by offering various educational and social activities as well as by building symbiotic relationships with corporate partners.

Communities of Excellence

Geographic Communities
East Bay
New England
New York Metro
Philadelphia Metro
Rochester
Washington DC–Baltimore

Virtual Communities
Academic SIG
Instructional Design & Learning SIG

Communities of Merit
San Diego

Distinguished Service Awards

The Society for Technical Communication has long recognized the importance of the hard work and commitment of its community members. Without their energy and enthusiasm, the Society would cease to be the largest, most effective, and most prestigious organization of technical communicators in the world.

On the following pages are the honorees this year for the Distinguished Chapter Service Awards, Distinguished SIG Service Awards, and Distinguished Service Award for Students. Congratulations to each of them and thank you for your service to the Society. And thank you to the members of the committee, Cindy Pao, Adam Evans, Cheryl Landes, and Linda Urban.

Distinguished Chapter Service Awards

In 1988, the Society initiated the Distinguished Chapter Service Award (DCSA) to recognize exemplary dedication to the chapter and its activities. The first awards were presented in 1989. Following is a list of DCSA winners for 2015 with their official citations.

Carolina
Lori Meyer
For sustained contributions to the Carolina Chapter. For your diligent attention to deadlines and details, experience, innovative ideas, wisdom, wealth of experience, and dedication. For your perpetual good cheer, goodwill, and volunteerism that goes well beyond the call of duty.

Chicago
Cheri Noble
For your exemplary service in numerous committees and positions in STC Chicago; for your collaboration skills; and for having a positive attitude while serving.

East Bay
Romy Sinha
For your enthusiastic involvement throughout your chapter membership and your commitment to maintaining a strong, healthy community through sponsorship and volunteer recognition.

Houston
Julie Garrison
For your dedicated work the past several years as our chapter treasurer, your friendly face welcoming meeting attendees at each program, and your loyal service and great attitude toward making STC Houston a success.

STC India
Ramesh Aiyyangar
For your passion, exemplary leadership, commitment, dedication, innovative ideas, helping nature, tireless efforts to promote the technical communication profession, and sustained contributions over all these years to the STC India Chapter.

STC India
Naveen Harry D'Cruz
For your tireless and selfless dedication to the chapter, to promoting the technical communication profession in India, and to increasing the visibility of STC in India; and for your exemplary leadership, commitment, and contribution in generating revenue for the chapter.

New York Metro
Nitza Hauser
For your exemplary efforts to revitalize the educational initiatives, streamline processes, and gain recognition for the NY Metro Chapter and for your many other selfless contributions to chapter activities.

Northeast Ohio
Janean Voss
For exceptional leadership of the Northeast Ohio Chapter, and for your commitment to fostering relationships with local colleges and the next generation of technical communicators.

Orlanda Central Florida
Alex Garcia
For exhibiting leadership qualities and for serving the Orlando Central Florida Chapter in so many ways as you transitioned from student member to active regular membership; for identifying new sources of revenue for the chapter; and for cheerfully stepping up to volunteer whenever the need arises.

Philadelphia Metro
Stephen Adler
For your outstanding leadership of the Philadelphia Metro Chapter —for your dedication, enthusiasm, and countless contributions over the years.

Philadelphia Metro
Timothy Esposito
For your dedication in serving the Philadelphia Metro Chapter in many capacities over the years, including treasurer, webmaster, and scholarship chair.

Rochester
Estelle Holloway
For your cheerfulness, professionalism, and consistent dedication in supporting the Rochester Chapter's programs, conferences, and rapidly emerging needs.

Sacramento Metro
Cherie Woodward
For the dynamo of the Sacramento Metro Chapter—a constant source of energy, creativity, and generous support for fellow technical communication professionals.

Southeastern Michigan
Thomas Glennan
For your professionalism and dedication to the STC Southeastern Michigan Chapter, including the time you have spent leading and promoting awareness of our chapter and training tomorrow's technical communicators.

Washington, DC–Baltimore
Lori Meyer
For sustained contributions to the Washington, DC–Baltimore Chapter. For your diligent attention to deadlines and details, experience, innovative ideas, wisdom, wealth of experience, and dedication. For your perpetual good cheer, goodwill, and volunteerism that goes well beyond the call of duty.

Willamette Valley
Shawn H. Mershon
For your long and late hours of dedication to the creative design and layout of *The Willamette Galley* newsletter and for your professionalism as employment manager in fulfilling the needs of members and clients.

Willamette Valley
Sharon Brooke Vail
For your meticulous attention to the Willamette Valley Chapter budget, patience in clarifying columns of numbers, rapid responses to all budget concerns, and effervescent welcome to members and guests at chapter events.

Distinguished SIG Service Award

In 2002, the Society initiated a formal awards program to recognize the commitment and hard work of members of its special interest groups (SIGs). The Distinguished SIG Service Award (DSSA) recognizes length of SIG membership, consistency of service over the duration of membership, and variety of service.

Following are the winners of the 2015 Distinguished SIG Service Award and their official citations.

Instructional Design & Learning
Mellissa Ruryk
For your ingenuity, willingness to take on responsibility, and your no-nonsense yet humorous approach to building the IDL SIG community.

Usability and User Experience
Ann Wiley
For your exemplary efforts to lead the transition of the Usability & User Experience SIG website and its extensive library of information to the new format and architecture.

Distinguished Service Award for Students

The Distinguished Service Award for Students (DSAS) recognizes student members who provide exemplary service to the Society through their dedication to their chapter and its activities.

Following are the winners of the 2015 Distinguished SIG Service Award and their official citations.

Orlando Central Florida
Lisa Bottomley
For your skill, enthusiasm, commitment, and persistence in developing and implementing an innovative secondary-level educational outreach initiative; for your service as co-manager of the Orlando Central Florida STC Chapter Education Committee; and for the value you have added as a contributor to our newsletter, a presenter at a chapter meeting, and as a member of our core leadership team.

"I GOT A PROJECT THAT TURNED INTO A $25,000-A-YEAR GIG THANKS TO THE STC SUMMIT!"
"I spoke up in a session at a past Summit and was approached afterward by a man who was scouting for editors. He lived only about 50 miles from me, but I probably would never have met him otherwise. This encounter evolved into a $25,000-a-year gig of interesting editing with a small firm that pays well and on time, and even holds dinners for its contractors twice a year. I always knew that I had to show up to make connections and attending the Summit proved it!"
Bette Frick
MY NAME IS BETTE FRICK AND
I'M AN STC MEMBER
http://summit.stc.org

Interview with Nancy Duarte,
Opening Keynote Speaker at the 2015 Summit

BY NICKY BLEIEL | *Senior Member*

Nicky: I'm speaking with Nancy Duarte, who's the opening keynote at the STC Summit in June, in Columbus, Ohio. I would like to thank you so much for joining me to talk about your work, and also, about your keynote.

Nancy Duarte: Thank you. It's great to meet you, and I'm excited about the STC event.

Nicky: That's awesome, we're excited, too. Now, before we dive in, I want to take a quick tour through your resume so that everyone who is attending the Summit will know a little bit more about you.

First of all, you're the author of three popular books about how to make presentations more effective:

- *Resonate: Present Visual Stories that Transform Audiences*
- *Slide:ology: The Art and Science of Creating Great Presentations*, and
- *The Harvard Business Review Guide to Persuasive Presentations*

Three great books there, and I understand you're working right now on a new book that's going to come out soon. Can you tell me a little bit about it?

Nancy: Yeah, we're working hard on it. This time, I have a coauthor, which is totally fun.

The smart, smart gal on my team where we've come up with a pattern of transformation. As a leader, it's our job to transform our organization, so we are ready in the future, and there's really no way to transform without persuading.

We found a pattern of transformation, and the types of stories, speeches and ceremonies you need to do to create these galvanizing moments that push people toward the future you are trying to create.

It's really a lovely piece. I'm excited about it, writing it changed me and really bonded me with my coauthor in a way I didn't know was possible; we are having a good time.

Nicky: That's great. I think that the audience at STC is going to find this book very interesting, because we're always talking about it (transformation).

Nancy: Yeah, I can sneak some of the models in my presentation.

Nicky: It's awesome, because we're always talking about how important change and transformation is, that sounds really great.

I have to jump back to your resume again, because you have so many

great things. You gave a TED talk, and you also work with the TED team to improve the quality of TED talks, you're TED "squared."

You worked with Al Gore to create the presentation that is at the core of "An Inconvenient Truth," and you're the CEO of Duarte Design, the largest design firm in Silicon Valley, which you started in 1988, so it's been around for a while. You were leaning in before it was trendy.

Nancy: Yeah. I leaned in so far, I think I've fallen over. An ancient leaner, I guess I am.

Nicky: You set the standard.

Nancy: I hope so.

Nicky: Jumping back to talks,

You've done many types of conferences—you've done marketing conferences, tech conferences, probably some other kinds. Are you looking forward to addressing an audience of fellow communicators?

Nancy: Oh, I love having conversations with communicators, because I feel like we have walked in each other shoes.

I know what it's like, I know what they go through on a daily basis, I know how hard it is to craft a piece of communication that brings the kind of transformation you are trying to bring.

I can talk in shorthand, and if I can talk in shorthand with other communicators, I can get through our material, and then, they can get more value out of our talk. I'll be talking super fast, which is talking in shorthand, and see if I can get through as much as you guys pull out of me, I'm happy to give.

Nicky: That sounds fantastic. Now, I was looking at your website and you have a project called the Slidedoc project. I guess you could say #Slidedoc that's really interesting, and I think anyone interested in learning more about communication should take a look at it.

In it, one of the things you mentioned is that shorter communication is the new norm. I was wondering if you could elaborate on why you found that that's the truth?

Nancy: Yeah, we coined the term Slidedoc, and the only reason I'm protecting it with a trademark is so I can put it in the public domain, and eventually, try to get it to be a dictionary term. We've just changed so much, how we process and consume information. We're consuming them in smaller bites.

It's really rare, when you are making a really big technical decision you may sit for two hours and really read through some technical documentation, but probably not.

You usually go and find the exact answer you need for the exact question you have, and it's not very often you can see someone with their feet propped up on their desk reading for two hours. We just don't do that anymore. We get access to bites of information that set us up to be successful.

One of the reasons people hate presentations is because they have really made Slidedocs. They've created documents they can travel around email, or travel around anywhere and are selfexplanatory.

Everything you need to know, you can read it on the slide, and so, what happens is your presenter will turn their back to the audience and read a Slidedoc, whereas, a Slidedoc can live and spread on it's own. The first content marketing, slides were, they could spread everywhere.

What we did was we named the enemy, this is a really bad, dense slide. I think around 85 percent of all slides are dense, rich information, it's meeting a communication need. Clearly, it's a very nice, brief form. What we're saying is pour a little bit more on those really dense slides and call it a document.

It's really nice, because it's modular, collateral. We don't even hear the word collateral anymore in marketing or communication, it's just gone from our vernacular. That's because slides have replaced collateral. Go into these really dense slides and make them beautiful, make them have visual hierarchy.

Make it so they can find things quickly as they click, click, click, click through your slides. It's really turned out that people have been thrilled to get that body of work, because it really took the pressure off the communicators who really did know how to use it well.

Nicky: As I said, I think anyone interested in making more effective communications should just go to your website and check those out.

Nancy: Yeah, Slidedocs.com, and you can also get to it off of duarte.com (*www.duarte.com/slidedocs*). But it's faster to just go to Slidedocs.com.

Nicky: A thread throughout your work including your TED talk is the word resonate. Messages must resonate with your audience. Why do you think resonance is so important?

Nancy: I love it for the physics phenomenon of resonating. If you're communicating, and you are sending signals out all day, when you communicate in a way where that signal hits the resonant frequency of the receiving object, it'll vibrate, it'll move, it'll shake, it'll be touched.

And so, when someone says, "What you said resonates with me," what they're saying is, "You said something that hits me as true. It rang inside of me as true."

You can send out communications all day, but if you don't empathetically understand who you are talking to and communicate with them where they're at, and from their vantage point walk in their shoes, and really, understand what they need from you to be successful, then, you're not resonating.

The empathy is the core concept of resonating. I'm going to communicate to you in a way, and give you what you need to make you successful in your

journey. So often, as communicators, it's like, "I've got these 12 things I had to communicate, and my boss says they all have to be communicated."

We forget, we need to really think not about what we are trying to blast out there, but think about who is on the receiving end and what they need for us to be successful.

Nicky: Right, knowing your audience.

Nancy: Right.

Nicky: I know I keep going back to your TED talk, it was just so interesting. The name of it was, "The Secret Structure of Great Talks," and I thought it was very interesting that you give a talk about giving great talks. That must have been a lot of pressure.

Nancy: When the presentation lady gives a presentation, you have to nail it. I can't be a terrible presenter and be the presentation lady.

I knew the stakes were high, and it was a TEDx talk. It was a TEDx talk out of New York, and I knew that, if I really nailed it, a small percent of TEDx talks get picked up and put on TED.com.

I did the talk in 2011, and it got a lot of pickup when they put it on YouTube. I tweeted, "Oh, my TEDx talk has this many hits," and I copied TED.com, and they picked it up and put it on the main site, which I was happy about. But that was actually a year and a half after the talk that they picked it up.

I spent 35 hours just rehearsing. I'm a professional speaker, so I trimmed it, and had a coach, and she's like, "You know, you're spending a minute on this, and I think that's only worth about 15 seconds in the context of the talk, so you can take this other 45 seconds and move it here."

It was just wow, to really dial it in to make sure I was creating the right emphasis on the material. When you rehearse, you naturally can get it to a certain place, but you sound like you are rehearsed. You sound like you memorized it, or sometimes, you look up, and try to remember what you are about to say.

And then there's this moment where you just forget what is in your head, you forget that you've memorize it, and you come across more naturally and conversational, and breaking through that barrier takes a long time. But for me, the stakes were high. I wouldn't say every executive should rehearse for 35 hours.

The talks had over a million hits. They reset the counter, I don't know why, but it's had about a million and a half views. If you take YouTube, Vimeo and add it all up, it had like a million and three quarter views. That's a lot, and it drove my business.

You can see, actually right when the TED talk hit, my business spiked and grew by about 30 percent, which was just a basket full of blessings and curses to grow that fast. It really made a difference that I put that much work into it.

Nicky: Preparation is always important, and as you noted, you prepared, but then, you reached a point where it wasn't memorization, it was just part of you.

Nancy: It was authenticity, yeah.

Nicky: It really comes through, by the way. I really enjoy it.

Nancy: Thanks.

Nicky: Now, technical communicators pride themselves on two things that you mentioned are two of your three keys to a great presentation.

Now, I won't tell people what the third one is, they're going to have to come to your talk and hear about it, but one thing is being audience-centric, and the other is understanding our roles as communicators. I wanted to mention that I believe the audience will be very friendly.

Nancy: I hope so.

Nicky: We're on team Nancy, so we totally get where you're coming from.

That being said, could you tell me a little bit about the talk you are planning for the Summit in June? You don't have to give it all away, but I just want to hear what the takeaways for the audience would be.

Nancy: In June, I'm going to do a longer form talk, go a lot deeper into some insights. I share insights into Steve Jobs and Dr. King that I don't share in the TED talk, and then, I bring in an analytical presenter, which I think everybody would really enjoy, a very technical presenter, and international examples.

I bring a female to the table, too, to analyze that. I do feel like my body of work is around empathy, and as communicators, we are empathy architects. That's a title that I try to embody. I don't naturally have empathy.

I feel like I'm a heartfelt communicator, but I don't take the time to really process how you may receive what I'm saying, and so, I've built an infrastructure around myself and around my own heart to see empathy structurally so I can eventually be a person who walks in empathy.

Hopefully, maybe I'll be able to put a couple of models in there from my next book, too, which would be fun.

Nicky: That sounds really interesting.

Nancy: It's another model for empathy, of course.

Nicky: That sounds fantastic. I am really looking forward to your talk, and I know that everyone there is going to look forward to it after hearing all of this.

I know you're on a deadline to your book, so I want to say thanks so much for chatting with me, Nancy. I'm looking forward to meeting you in person, not just on Skype, and attending your keynote at the Society for Technical Communication Summit in Columbus, Ohio this June.

To listen to the interview podcast, visit STC's Notebook *blog.*

Don't Miss Out: Preconference Workshops Add Value to Your Summit Experience

BY CHRIS HESTER | *Chair of the STC Conference Committee*

LED BY INDUSTRY LEADERS, this year's preconference workshops provide an excellent opportunity to develop and practice skills that will help you stay ahead and provide value to you, your employer, and your customers. Explore a topic that will advance your professional development, or challenge yourself with a new topic that can move your career in a new direction:

- Information Architecture for Everybody, Abby Covert
- Project Management for the Technical Communicator, Liz Herman
- Crash Course in API Documentation, Tom Johnson
- Creating Documentation-Centric, Interactive Mobile Apps, Neil Perlin

Want to gain even more value from the Summit this year? Build a learning plan that starts with earning a certificate and follows up with related presentations and workshops during the Summit. The two-day certificate workshops will be held on Saturday, 20 June, and Sunday, 21 June.

Getting to Success: Implementing a Content Strategy

Rahel Bailie leads participants through a content strategy project, starting with identifying needs and gathering requirements, and moving through the selection of deliverables to measuring your success with implementation.

After this workshop, attend the following sessions for deeper dives into topics that support content strategy projects:

- Creating Tangible Experiences, Marli Mesibov
- Wireframing, Interactive Mockups, and Prototyping Made Easy, John Collins
- Under the Influences: Context as Strategy, Keith Anderson
- Phones Aren't Flat: Designing for People, Data and Ecosystems, Steve Hoober
- UX Axioms: How to Design Better Products for People, Erik Dahl
- Discuss Design without Losing Your Mind, Adam Connor

Technical Editing Fundamentals for All

Linda Oestreich and Michelle Corbin lead a two-day intensive on the writer/editor collaboration and discuss how to edit beyond words on the page, such as user interfaces and embedded assistance.

After completing Linda and Michelle's session, further your writing and editing skills with the following sessions:

- Writing for Mobile: Don't Shrink It—Rethink It!, Jenny Stout and Marta Rauch
- Clever Copy for Happy Users, Lauren Colton
- Letting Go of the Little Things, Leah Guren
- How to Make Sense of Any Mess, Abby Covert
- Information Design for Technical Communicators, Linda Oestreich

The preconference workshop fees are separate from the Summit registration fees. If you have already registered for the Summit and would like to add a preconference workshop to your registration now, please contact Deborah Repasy, STC Education Coordinator, at *deborah.repasy@stc.org* or 571-366-1909.

Can't make it to Columbus? Participate in the Summit Live with the Virtual Track Option!

ARE YOU INTERESTED in attending the Summit but can't make the trip to Columbus? We understand, and we have a solution that allows you to take part in the excitement without having to be there in person—the Virtual Track!

The Virtual Track of the 2015 Summit will take place on Monday, 22 June, and Tuesday, 23 June, and includes 10 carefully selected sessions from a cross-section of the overall Summit education program. During the breaks, you'll also have a chance to hear from STC about the latest news and programs, and discover technology trends from a selection of exhibitors. And to ensure your virtual attendance feels even more like the real thing, each session will have a moderator so you can ask questions and interact with the session as if you were there in person.

The full schedule of sessions and breaks can be viewed online at *summit.stc.org*, so what are you waiting for? Register today!

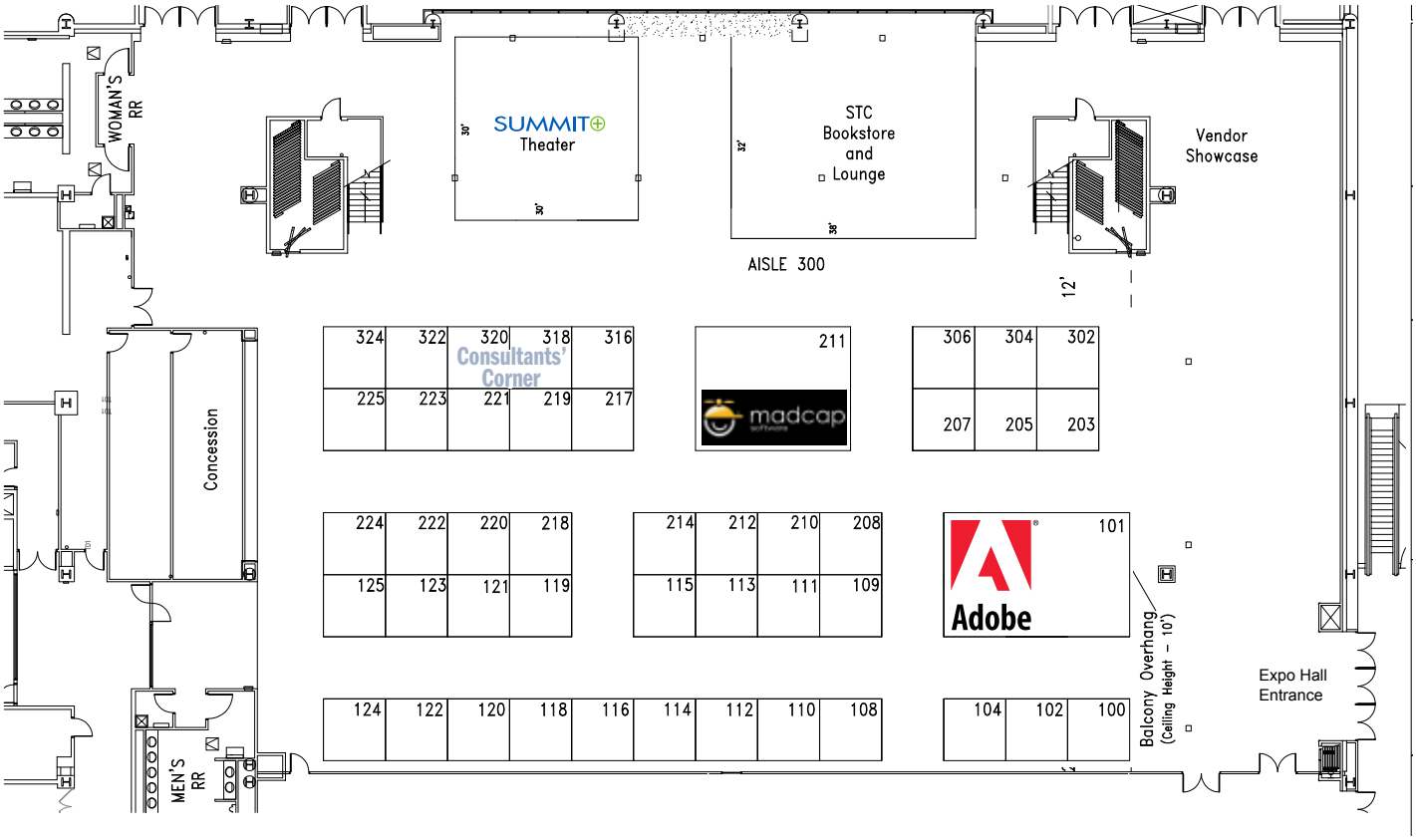
NOTE: You must register no later than 17 June to attend the Virtual Track and receive login instructions. Registration past this date will be unavailable due to staff travel to the Summit in Columbus.

List of Exhibitors

WHO'S IN COLUMBUS? See below for a preliminary list of exhibitors at the 2015 Technical Communication Summit.

Company	Booth	Website
36Software	214	www.36software.com
Ad Verbum	306	www.adverbum.com
Adobe Systems	101	www.adobe.com
AIIP	114	www.aiip.org
Antidot - Fluid Topics	108	www.fluidtopics.com
DocZone	316	www.doczone.com
Double Tall Consulting	102	www.hedtke.com
Euroscript Canada Inc.	302	www.euroscript.com
Information Mapping	217	www.informationmapping.com
JustSystems Canada, Inc.	115	www.xmetal.com
KantanMT	220	www.kantanmt.com
Ken Cook Co.	207	www.kencook.com
Kinetic. TheTechnologyAgency™	208	www.kinetic.thetechnology agency.com
KJ International Resources Inc.	219	www.kjinternational.com
The LavaCon Conference	221	www.lavacon.org
Linguanational Translations, Inc.	100	www.linguanational.com
MadCap Software Inc.	211	www.madcapsoftware.com
Mercer University	304	www.mercer.edu
Pearson Education	111	www.pearsonhighered.com
Simply XML	212	www.simplyxml.com
Single-Sourcing Solutions, Inc.	110	www.singlecourcing.com
STAR Group America, LLC	218	www.us.star-group.net
Stilo International	109	www.stilo.com
TC Camp	112	www.tccamp.org
tekReader	113	www.tekreader.com
Titania Software	104	www.titaniasoftware.com
Vasont Systems	210	www.vasont.com
WebWorks	203, 205	www.webworks.com

Consultants Corner	
Group Wellesley, Inc.	www.groupwellesley.com
Hyper/Word Services	www.hyperword.com
Marshall Documentation Consulting	www.marshalldocumentationservices.com
Vulkan Forge	www.vulkanforge.com



Tech Comm Career Management in the 21st Century

shutterstock.com/ maverick_infanta

BY NEIL PERLIN | *Fellow*

WHEN I ENTERED the field of technical communication in the late 1970s, career management was simple. Get a job, then accumulate experience and longevity to enter the management track as a doc group manager or the consulting track as a consulting technical writer. All this took place within the stable confines of a supportive company, with stable or slowly changing technology. Not anymore.

Today, of course, companies have downsized techcomm groups, sub-specialties like editing or indexing have almost vanished in many companies, and the technology continues to evolve. How do we manage our careers in an environment like this?

What follows is based on my own experience and that of other technical communicators I've met, some in passing and some who've become friends. Take what best fits you out of the discussion that follows.

Select Your Business Model

Decide whether you want a permanent job or a position as a contractor or consultant. Most people look for permanent positions because of the benefits and supposed stability. But if you plan to become a contractor or consultant, look for permanent jobs very carefully because those jobs will have to give you experience in the subject and tools that you want to take into contracting/consulting and expose you to skills like project management as well.

Also be aware of the difference between being a contractor and a consultant. Contractors work through a contract agency that handles placement, invoicing, and so on, and they generally work on site for the client. In contrast, consultants handle their own placement, invoicing, etc., and often work off site. If work-based socialization is important to you, consulting may not be a good choice.

If you're considering becoming a consultant, evaluate yourself to see if you're really suited for that much independence. How much autonomy do you want? How much isolation can you take? Are you expecting the freedom to come and go as you please? (Every consultant I know works 60 or more hours per week.)

Define Your Work Type Broadly

Plan to focus on a *type* of work rather than a specific tool. For example, don't be a Framemaker user, be a technical communicator who uses Framemaker and Word. That way, you won't be left without work if the market isn't offering any Framemaker jobs but is awash in Word jobs. Be flexible.

Brand Yourself

Branding yourself sets the image that people have of you. Do whatever

This column presents overviews of new technologies that may affect technical communicators in the near future. If you have feedback, or would like to suggest topics for subsequent columns, please contact Neil Perlin at *nperlin@concentric.net.*

possible to be sure that when a prospective employer or client thinks "API documentation" or "online help development," your name pops up in their mind. (That doesn't mean that you'll get the job, but you want to be "top of mind.")

There are many ways to brand yourself. Some, such as creating a website or brochures, clearly apply to contractors and consultants but not if you have a real job. Social media can be tricky. Here are some ideas, with the first four applying no matter what your position is.

- Do good work—This is so obvious that it can go unsaid, but it's crucial. Your reputation, based on the quality of your work and your personal reliability and professionalism, will get around. You need to be sure that what gets around is good.
- Practice public speaking—When people see you speak, assuming you do a good job, they'll brand you as an expert in your topic. Your local STC chapter, or other professional organization, is a logical place to try public speaking. It's an audience that deals with a subject in which you have expertise, so you're starting out with a friendly audience. Plus, chapters are always looking for (and will even help develop) new speakers on new topics.
- Write articles—This is similar to public speaking in that people will ascribe expertise to the author of an article that they read in a professional journal. Professional journals like *Intercom* or your local STC chapter newsletter are always open to new topics by new authors.
- Attend professional society meetings—In professional associations like STC, membership and meeting attendance reflect cultural shifts. In the late 1990s, people had to formally join and attend professional societies because alternatives like social media and meetups didn't exist. Today, those alternatives make it less imperative to attend a professional society meeting, but physically attending meetings lets people put your face to your name. I know people who've gotten a jump on a job that was announced at a meeting because they were there in person. And don't just attend meetings that have to do with writing. Attend meetings of groups that focus on the topics about which you write. For example, if you document accounting software, go to STC meetings but also go to the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants (*www.aicpa.org/Pages/default.aspx*) meetings to keep abreast of the direction of the profession.
- Leverage social media—Social media can be a great place to brand yourself, often with little effort. The easiest way to do so, in my experience, is by joining writing groups and groups related to your industry on LinkedIn and contributing when someone posts a question. You can also post on Twitter and in Facebook groups and, a bit unexpectedly, Pinterest (where I occasionally pin the front pages of apps I've created). A caveat with social media participation may lie in your company policies. Many companies that I speak with or read about, especially in finance or banking, have very restrictive policies about social media posting due to the chance that an employee may post a response to a question, and the response could be taken as expressing the company's position and put the company at legal risk. Talk to your manager and legal department before creating a social media profile that mentions your workplace.

Broaden Your Skills Beyond Your Current Tools

Tool skills are obviously vital but you shouldn't stop at just learning a tool. Extend your learning to the technologies that underlie tools and that create the technical environment in which you work. For example:

- Learn about CSS (Cascading Style Sheets), which forms a major part of almost all XML authoring tools. That will make it easier to transition from help authoring tool A to B when you change jobs.
- Learn about HTML5 in order to understand why HTML5 is supplanting WebHelp for online help publishing.
- Learn about nontechnical things that affect the business environment in which you work. For example, even a basic background in finance and strategic planning can help shed light on trends on the industry or things your company may do.
- Prepare for the future by reading company news releases and technical journal articles. They're always interesting and might even open up unexpected career doors. For example:
  - In 2010, after having been in mobile since 1998, I found a write-up of a tool called Google App Inventor that was the first GUI app development tool. (Imagine a version of Flare or RoboHelp aimed at app development and you've got the idea.) A year later, I was a certified app developer for an app authoring tool company outside Boston. Simply reading trade journals opened that door.
  - Within five days in late March, I found and posted on social media a short article that introduced the five main standards behind the Internet of Things (IoT). I also learned about a new virtual reality (VR) tool from Google called Cardboard that lets me view VR through an Android smartphone. I ordered one, for about $14, and it is the subject of my next column in the June issue of *Intercom*. I may never get involved with IoT or VR, but I can think of many uses for VR within technical communication, and

this will give me a fast and cheap introduction to the experience and the development tools.

Take Responsibility for Your Career

Finally, and most importantly, is the need to take responsibility for your own career. In the day when we worked for large, supportive companies, it was easy to fall into the trap of tailoring our career decisions to the options that the company provided or of letting the company pay for things and abandoning those things when the company stopped paying for them, such as membership or professional conferences. Two suggestions come to mind in this situation:

1. Do the career options offered by the company meet your career desires? If not, then you have to take charge of your career by doing the other things I describe in the column, and more.
2. If the company stops paying for membership or conference attendance, then you have to decide whether the benefit of that membership or conference is worth paying for yourself. If it is, then that becomes your responsibility.

Summary

Technical communication isn't what it used to be. In exchange for less career stability and predictability, we've gotten access to challenging technologies like online help and the Web, and emerging new ones like virtual and augmented reality, apps, structured authoring, output automation, and more. But one side effect has been that we now have to drive our own careers in order to take advantage of these opportunities. It will call for new ways of thinking, but the result will be continued challenge and job growth into the future. Personally, I look forward to this for many years to come.

NEIL PERLIN (nperlin@nperlin.cnc.net) *is president of Hyper/Word Services (www.hyperword.com) of Tewksbury, MA. He has 36 years of experience in technical writing, with 30 in training, consulting, and developing for online formats and tools including WinHelp, HTML Help, JavaHelp, CE Help, XML, RoboHelp, Flare, and others. Neil is MadCap-certified for Flare and Mimic, Adobe-certified for RoboHelp, and Viziapps-certified for the ViziApps mobile app development platform. He is an STC Fellow and the founder and manager of the Beyond the Bleeding Edge track, which ran at the STC Summit from 1999 until 2014.*

ASD Simplified Technical English (STE) term checker

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- Approved as a noun
- Approved as an adjective
- Approved as a noun and as an adjective.

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* *Fluid* is approved as a noun only, unlike *liquid*, which is approved as a noun and as an adjective.

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STC Society for Technical Communication

www.stc.org

Mark Your Calendar

Organization Events Across the Globe

F.Y.I. lists information about nonprofit ventures only. Please send information to *intercom@stc.org.*

1 27–29 May
Join the **Association of Proposal Management Professionals (APMP)** for their Bid & Proposal Con at the Sheraton Hotel in Seattle, WA. For details
APMP
www.apmp.org

2 21–24 June
The **Society for Technical Communication** hosts the Technical Communication Summit in Columbus, OH. For more information, contact:
STC
+1 (703) 522-4114
http://summit.stc.org

3 22-25 June
The **User Experience Professionals Association (UXPA)** 2015 International Conference, with a theme of Simplicity, will be held at the Loews Coronado Bay Resort in Coronado, CA. For more information contact:
UXPA
conf2015@uxpa.org
www.uxpa2015.org

4 12–15 July
The **IEEE Professional Communication Society (PCS)** hosts ProComm 2015 (formerly IPCC), in Limerick, Ireland. For more information, contact:
IEEE PCS
http://pcs.ieee.org/ipcc2015/

5 30 Sept–3 Oct
The **American Medical Writers Association (AMWA)** will hold its 75th annual conference, with a theme of "Quest Toward Brilliance," at the Grand Hyatt San Antonio in San Antonia, TX. For more information, contact:
AMWA
+1 (301) 294-5303
amwa@amwa.org
www.amwa.org/events_annual_conference

6 4-7 Nov
The **American Translators Association (ATA)** will hold its 56th annual conference at the Hyatt Regency Miami in Miami, FL. For more information, contact:
ATA
+1 (703) 683-6100
ata@atanet.org
www.atanet.org/conf/2015

7 6-10 Nov
The **American Society for Information Science and Technology (ASIS&T)** will hold its Annual Meeting in St. Louis, MO. For more information, contact:
ASIS&T
asis@asis.org
https://www.asist.org/events/annual-meeting

8 8-10 Nov
The **Public Relations Society of America (PRSA)** hosts their international conference in Atlanta, GA. For more information, contact:
PRSA
+1 (800) 350-0111
www.prsa.org/Conferences/InternationalConference/

* STC-related event

Taking Care of Business

BY JUDITH SHENOUDA | *Senior Member*

IN THE SPRING of 1985, I was working in a career services office for a university when a request came from a corporate manager for someone to write a policies and procedures manual. Although I had not worked in corporate America and had not written a manual, a colleague encouraged me to apply. With a degree in public communication and a major in literacy journalism, I had solid writing skills. I took the four-month assignment, enjoyed the work, did it well, resigned from the university, worked through an agency on a variety of technical and business writing projects, and, a year later, launched my own business.

Part of what I love about running Shenouda Associates Inc. is the ability to schedule my own time. By now, I know what needs to be done to keep the business humming along. My calendar is filled with key dates, so that at the start of any given week, I can set priorities. No longer is every day or every hour booked, which means I have the luxury of doing some of my own creative work, including self-publishing my own books.

Overall, my job includes activities in the administrative, human resources (HR), and marketing areas—and, of course, many day-to-day activities revolve around the craft of researching, writing, editing, and publishing.

Administrative activities include time spent tracking time worked on projects, billing clients, preparing a payroll, and assuring that the business is taking in more than it is spending. In a nutshell, this is time invested in taking care of business—essential to any business's success.

At Shenouda Associates Inc., I am the HR department. As someone who enjoys spending time with people and getting to know them, I regularly go to meetings and events of professional organizations such as STC and often meet others who are candidates for projects. Over time, I have developed a cadre of human resources, with a variety of skills, who can work on technical communication and related projects.

Marketing is an ongoing pursuit. By now, I have all kinds of collaterals—a printed presentation folder, business card, brochure, as well as a website, blog, and online presence in social networking sites—that convey our capabilities. When potential or current clients want to know how we can meet specific communication needs, I write project proposals and statements of work. Once the project is in hand, these tools evolve into tracking tools, assuring that the business delivers what was promised.

Some portion of each week and often each day is spent on the craft of a technical and business communicator. Currently, I am analyzing a series of websites in a vertical market and documenting the elements on each page, writing a service manual for a client's new product, and organizing and editing the contents of a book that a client will self-publish. With others in my business involved in writing, editing, and publishing a variety of print and electronic deliverables for clients, I am often another pair of eyes or hands, doing whatever is needed to hand off a quality deliverable.

My job is more than doing administrative, HR, marketing, and craft-related activities. It is about creating value by fulfilling our promise: *Shenouda eases communication*, making the world work just a little bit better—manual by manual, publication by publication, book by book.

JUDITH SHENOUDA *(*Shenouda@easescommunication.com*) is owner of Shenouda Associates Inc. (*http://easescommunication.com*), a business that researches, writes, and edits the professional publications that launch products, streamline processes, and promote each client's brand. She has achieved recognition as a Toastmasters International Advanced Leader Bronze and Advanced Communicator Bronze and is co-founder of Thinking Forward (*http://thinkingforward.us*), a troupe of professional speakers. Judith presents seminars and webinars on topics related both to her business and the books she authored and published,* Career Success in 12 Easy Steps: A Journal *and* A Bisl of This, A Bisl of That: Eating Our Way.

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